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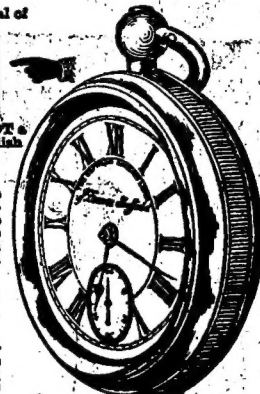
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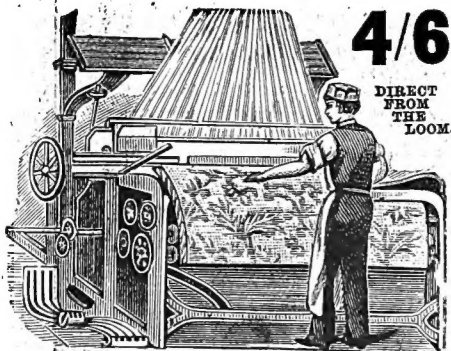
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THE WOMAN AT THE LITTLE WHITE HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

Dr. Shand of B Division.

"'ROSE COTTAGE, Pike's Hill.' Well, by Jove, I thought I knew division B, like the palm of my own hand, but it appears I flattered myself! This is Pike's Hill, right enough, yet I'll be hanged if I can discover anything approaching to roses or rusticity."

Lucius Shand tilted his square-crowned felt hat to one side as he stood and pulled thoughtfully at the lobe of a large, well-shaped ear. He had halted near the top of a long, roughly-paved, sharply-inclined thoroughfare; beneath him, spread out in a crowded and very smoky panorama, lay three-fourths of the division to which he had referred. A scorching summer sun poured down its rays upon him, making the surgeon's moist brow and cheeks as red as his auburn hair.

Behind and about him were the tall, untidy mansions of a decaying suburb, once the best residential district of the town. Even in its present dilapidated condition it was sleepily respectable. There were but few shops in its immediate neighbourhood and—the afternoon still being young and the children of the locality yet at school—its broad, sultry roadways were practically deserted.

The divisional surgeon frowned, for he was wasting his time, and the fact annoyed him.

"Dash it!" he murmured; "why couldn't they have given me a fuller address?" He drew from the breast-pocket of his frock-coat a printed document, with blank spaces arranged for filling in—a letter was attached, a letter in a bold, clerkly script. "'Rose Cottage, Pike's Hill,'" repeated Lucius Shand, disgustingly; "not a word more, and there can't be fewer than a thousand houses in Pike's Hill. I suppose I must appeal to the nearest post-office."

He was about to descend the slope before him when a heavy tread sounded hard by and he perceived, stalking deliberately through the torrid sunshine, a constable, with the divisional letter B. upon his numbered collar. The striped armlet on his sleeve showed that he was upon duty. At sight of the surgeon he saluted.

Lucius Shand went towards him and bade him a cheerful, half-irritable, good-day—there was scarcely a member of the force in the division who was not known to the surgeon.

"See here," he added, "can you tell me of a Rose Cottage in these parts, or have I been sent on a wild-goose chase by those mummies at headquarters?"

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The other started: He was a burly Yorkshireman, with a shrewd, bronzed countenance.

"Rose Cottage, sir!" he observed, reflectively. "excuse my mentioning it, but I fancy that'll be about a report of mine. Rose Cottage, sir, is, at the back of yonder brick wall—the one with the small door and the high wooden gates in it."

The constable raised a muscular, blue-coated arm to point obliquely across the hilly roadway and down a drowsy-looking street which adjoined it. For quite a third of its length it was bordered by the wall indicated.

"There used to be an inscription on the door till lately," Lucius Shand was informed, "you can't see the house from the outside—it's a little white villa, with a fairly sizable piece of ground about it, lawns and shrubberies and that sort of thing."

"Indeed," said the surgeon, "and what may your report about Rose Cottage have been?"

The other came closer to his questioner and answered in the peculiar husky tones affected by the police when in a confidential mood.

"It was about the lunatic they keep shut up there," came the reply, "or rather try to, for last week he got out and a fine chase they had after him. A slim chap, sir, with close-cropped hair and a suit of flannels; talks fast and excitedly. In charge of a quiet, black-moustached gentleman who told me he was a doctor. I helped to get him back to the cottage, me and some rough fellows who were with the doctor—I understand they were kind of attendants on the lunatic. I reported the affair, sir, and not having ever heard that Rose Cottage was licensed for such purposes, I wondered, when you asked for the place, if you were calling officially. Pardon the liberty, sir."

Lucius Shand made a friendly gesture. "Don't mention it," he said, "I always like to be well-informed."

"Quite so, sir," assented the constable, respectfully, "in that case, perhaps I might add that people do say in the neighbourhood that the poor beggar's weakness takes the form of burrowing in the ground about wherever he happens to live. Something like the famous Duke of Portland, sir. It's thought he's rich, or his relatives are, and these attendants of his are believed to be working-men, who carry out, in a sort of way, his half-witted plans. It seems he's afraid of someone or other and wants to have his underground passages to hide in. At least, so the story goes."

The divisional surgeon put into his pocket the document he had mechanically retained in his fingers.

"Thanks," he responded, "that's very interesting. And now I'll get on to Rose Cottage itself. Good afternoon."

The constable saluted again and Lucius Shand, the irritable expression that had been contracting on his sensitive features succeeded by one of anticipation, returned the salute abstractedly. Then he strode to the further side of the sloping thoroughfare, gained the by-street, and paused at the low, nail-studded door of which his guide had spoken. It was flanked by a couple of lofty wooden gates, solid, and sown with spikes on their upper edges.

For some time the surgeon waited and finally a bolt was shot back within. The door opened and Lucius Shand saw a narrow alley, floored by asphalt and screened by arched trellises, overgrown with dusty creeper. To the left he distinguished a spacious garden, to the right a weedy, disused stable-yard. At the extremity of the railed alley rose up a white stucco-fronted block with huge awkward gables. It was the much-discussed Rose Cottage.

On the threshold of the newly-opened door stood a woman, dark, youthful, and not without a certain species of stern, almost sombre beauty. Her face had a singular pallor in it—of sickness or alarm; her eyes suggested the latter. She was simply dressed and her sleeves were rolled up to the elbow as if she had been engaged in some domestic task.

"What do you want?" she said abruptly. Her voice trembled. Lucius Shand gave her a card.

"I wish to see the person in authority here," he answered; "I am informed that it is a Dr. Lorimer."

The woman stepped back, regarding him keenly. "Will you come in?" she requested. The surgeon entered the narrow avenue. As he did so, she closed the door behind him and locked it. This accomplished, she led him forward and through a second door into the house at the end of the green alley. Ushering him as far as a scantily furnished parlour on the same level, she left him alone.

Lucius Shand, according to his wont, had taken a rapid, exhaustive, unostentatious inventory of her appearance. Sinking into a saddle-bag armchair by the fireless hearth of the apartment, he reflected that, if physiognomy counted for anything, the woman of whom he had been permitted so brief a glimpse was a character of rare force and determination. Brown-haired, brown-eyed, with a Greek profile and a thin-lipped, resentful mouth, she was a creature to linger in the memory of a man such as the divisional surgeon. He leant back, lost in a sudden reverie.

An odd noise disturbed him—a noise absurdly slight, yet loud enough in the silence that surrounded him. It was crisp and crackling—he had seated himself upon something responsible for the sound and he moved hastily. In a corner of the cushioned chair was a crumpled scrap of paper; he plucked it from under him to fling it into the grate.

There was that about it that arrested his attention. He hesitated, then smoothed it out and sat pondering it. It was blank. He held it up to the light, fingered it, and slowly folding it, put it into his vest pocket. His brows knitted and he pulled at the lobe of his ear—a favourite sign of perplexity.

An instant later the door of the room was flung wide and there marched in a tall, vigorous personage, high-collared, frock-coated, affable. He, too, was dark, with brown hair and eyes; it would not have surprised Lucius Shand to learn that there was a tie of blood between him and the only other occupant of Rose Cottage whom the divisional surgeon had encountered.

"Dr. Shand," he said, "delighted to meet you. I am Dr. Lorimer—Dr. William Lorimer, of New York. To what do I owe this visit on the part of one of my professional brethren?"

Lucius Shand got up to bow. "I have a magistrate's order," he returned stiffly, "to examine and report on a person kept here in restraint and supposedly of unsound mind—I am, of course, a physician as well as a surgeon, though I have not the mystic L.S.A. on my card."

The American smiled and shrugged his shoulders. "An English legal formality, I presume," he observed. "Well, my

dear sir, my patient and I are quite at your service. He is Mr. Andrew Millican, a gentleman afflicted with delusions of a more or less permanent nature, and he has been intrusted to my care by a wealthy relative. I will bring him to you at once—he is, at this moment, docile, but has been, of late, unusually restless. I must ask you to avoid exciting him as much as possible."

The divisional surgeon murmured a few polite phrases of assent and, with an equally polite apology for his temporary absence, the American departed. When he was alone, Lucius Shand took from his vest pocket the piece of cracking paper which he had secreted, and re-inspected it carefully.

CHAPTER II.

The Tunnels at Rose Cottage.

"You are wasting my time, I say; wasting my time! Why will you not let me get on with my work? I am making the new one fine and deep—they will never unearth me, I promise you! But I must finish it quickly; yes, and others too, the more the better."

The words penetrated to Lucius Shand's ear a second or two before the speaker appeared. The latter was a slender, excitable-looking man, evidently still young, with closely-cropped hair, pale grey pupils, and a suit of flannels, not unlike a cricketing outfit. The American led him persuasively.

"This is Mr. Millican,—er,—Mr. Shand," he remarked, winking at the surgeon confidentially, and laying a slight emphasis on the non-professional title he had given his visitor.

"I have told him you are a friend of mine and that you wish particularly to make his acquaintance. But he is very busy."

"Busy!" cried the other, "of course I'm busy. But if he's a friend of yours, Lorimer, he shall come into my tunnels with you when they get here."

"When who get here, Mr. Millican?" interpolated Lucius Shand, with a friendly air; he was studying covertly the slight twitching figure.

Andrew Millican lowered his voice to a sibilant, important tone. "The Medes and Persians," he said, "oh, they are coming, though no one will believe me, except Lorimer. Even the workmen laugh at me. But one of these days it will be I who will laugh; oh, yes! When I am safely hidden, and Lorimer and you Mr.—Mr. whoever you are, and we listen to them tramping, tramping over our heads, then I shall laugh and you may laugh, too, if you choose."

"Perhaps," observed the American, in an aside to the surgeon; "you would prefer that I should retire and leave you to examine him alone?" And he made as if to slip from the apartment. Andrew Millican darted after him.

"That's right!" he exclaimed; "back to work, back to work! We must not be idle, we must push on. S—s—sh! my voices have warned me that it will be soon now—the ships are being built to carry them over—hundreds and hundreds of ships, they are afraid there won't be enough after all. The Medes will come first, then the Persians. But we shall be hidden—hidden away in the dark and they will never know. S—s—sh!"

He turned to Lucius Shand and waved an earth-stained hand. "You are Lorimer's friend," he said, "you shall see my tunnels. But you must not tell anyone outside—they are all mad, too mad to be afraid of the Medes and Persians. My workmen are mad, every one of them, and would you believe it?"—he doubled himself up with laughter—"they think it is I who am mad, not them? But they'll know who was mad when the Medes and Persians come."

Again he motioned invitingly to the surgeon and hastened out. The American—after an inquiring glance—held the door for Lucius Shand and they passed out together.

"A sad case," commented the surgeon's companion, twisting his black moustache; "overstudy did it. His health obstinately refused to mend—it had broken down completely—so long as he was prevented from digging and burrowing. His brother, a well-to-do City merchant, met me and mentioned the young fellow's affliction. I advocated quite a different

treatment and the end of it was I am established here in a quiet place where he can excavate all he wants to."

The American was piloting his visitor along a short corridor, at the extremity of which was an open door leading into the garden.

"I have even," added the American, "provided some steady men to assist him—they keep an eye on his doings and help to entertain him by operating on elaborate plans of his own. His health is fast becoming robust and I am not without hopes of ultimately effecting a cure. Even a recent outbreak of violence—during which he temporarily escaped from our charge—is not, as you know, a bad sign; the darkest hour and the proverbial dawn."

there by lanterns. A labourer was wheeling forth from it a barrowload of earth, to be added to a vast mound, which had been built up in a series of terraces at the further side of the intervening shrubbery. Into this tunnel the American's patient was already disappearing.

Lucius Shand followed the former into the excavation. Mr. Lorimer unhooked a lantern to guide him more assiduously and proceeded to pilot the surgeon from one part to another of a miniature catacomb. It had been obviously driven under almost the whole extent of the garden of Rose Cottage, and possibly, Lucius Shand calculated, under the streets beyond.

At the end of the newest working, in a gloom illuminated merely by a couple of oil-lamps, Andrew Millican was super-



She had stolen out into the garden, and was peering at him through the greenery.

"It is sometimes so," agreed Lucius Shand, politely. "As for my presence at the instigation of the authorities, I suppose you have omitted to secure the proper license for a single-patient house. You will receive a similar visit from another medical man, and afterwards, I imagine, a summons. But the magistrate will be most lenient to an inadvertent illegality. You will probably be bound over in your own recognisances on condition of putting the matter right immediately."

He was talking with a frank, good-tempered demeanour and his usual pronounced Irish accent. They had stepped out into the garden of the villa and were crossing the lawn.

An expression of relief sprang into the American's lean, astute face, he thanked the surgeon cordially as they went amicably down a gravel path towards a screened corner of the garden, where there yawned, sloping into the deep subsoil and underlying the native rock, a species of tunnel. It was propped and timbered in workmanlike style and lit here and

vising the labours of some three or four men, who grinned at each other as they lounged over their task.

"Nice and expensive!" murmured the American to the surgeon; "but his people say, 'Spare nothing to make him happy—let alone cure him.'"

Lucius Shand stooped to contemplate the odd spectacle; Andrew Millican noticed him and laughed childishly. "We are getting on, you see, Mr. Thingamy," he cried; "we'll be in time for the M's and P's—oh?" he laid his finger on his lip with a warning gesture, and, catching up a spade, began to fill the barrow that had just been brought back.

Dr. Lorimer touched the surgeon on the shoulder. "Like to return to the open air," he asked, "it's a trifle stuffy underground, don't you think?"

Lucius Shand assented, and, aided by the American's guiding light and the occasional wax glow of the dangling lanterns, regained the sunlit garden above. Lorimer laughed

as he brushed the loose earth from his companion's costume.

"I'm afraid my patient's mud-pies have rather messed you up, Dr. Shand," he said. "Well, I trust you have seen all you want to."

The surgeon nodded reflectively. "I believe so, Dr. Lorimer," he answered, "yes, I believe I have. Pray accept my thanks for your courtesy."

"Pleasure, I assure you, Doctor," responded the American, and he set down his lantern and escorted his visitor through the house to the bolted exit. As the latter stepped down the narrow railed aisle, his keen glance, travelling this way and that with graceful ease, perceived once more the woman with the dark brows and the rolled-up sleeves. She had stolen out into the garden and was peering at him through the greenery. The surgeon felt that her expression had in it the same stern, resentful anxiety as before.

He took the most affable farewell possible of the American and strode away towards. Not until he was a quarter of a mile distant did he pause again and draw from his pocket the piece of paper he had picked up in the parlour of Rose Cottage.

CHAPTER III.

"From Information Received."

"It's neck or nothing, sergeant, as far as my reputation's concerned, and yet I'm sure I'm not mistaken. However, if I'm wrong the Superintendent can only laugh at me. Where are your men?"

Lucius Shand slipped a small dark-lantern from his pocket as he asked the question, struck a match and lighted it. He was crouching in the shadow of the substantial brick wall that surrounded Rose Cottage. A sultry summer midnight brooded over the Pike's Hill district. By him stood a sturdy figure in the garments of a civilian.

"All within sound of the whistle, sir," was the answer to the surgeon's inquiry; "I myself shall stay here till you come back or summon us."

"Very good," said Lucius Shand, hiding the dark lantern in one of the cavernous recesses of his ulster, "and now you can give me a leg up."

He put the instep of one foot on the offered palm of the detective-sergeant and clung to the wall. The officer straightened himself and the surgeon, gaining the top of the brick slip, dropped into the garden beyond. As he reached it, a deep-mouthed bay split the air and there was the distant rattle of a chain.

Lucius Shand muttered a vigorous Irish curse on the canine guardian of Rose Cottage, and, stooping down, detached from a button on the inside of his ulster a short thick club. It was a blackthorn cudgel—a true shillalah, as hard as steel and balanced with rare science. Such a weapon, swung through its own length, will gain force enough to fracture a skull. The divisional surgeon looped it on his wrist by its thong.

Gliding from point to point he attained in safety the singular burrow of the Rose Cottage monomaniac and crept within. The lanterns had been extinguished and the tunnels were in profound obscurity. Going down on his hands and knees, the surgeon followed a devious course. Soon he began to probe cautiously at the floor of the burrow.

Some moments later he paused—his fingers had encountered a resisting substance that was not earth or rock, but wood—wood bolted with iron.

"Here must be where it seemed to ring hollow under my feet this afternoon," muttered Lucius Shand, and he produced his dark lantern, to twist the slide a fraction—a ray of yellow light fell across the gloom.

Before him was exposed, in the floor of the tunnel, a square of stout timber, fitting stoutly into a frame equally stout; a mass of loose mould and fragments of rock had been swept from off it and lay about it. The surgeon got out a bulky knife, chose a powerful prier, forced it into the crack between the trap-door and the frame and bore on it cautiously.

The block lifted slightly and he was able to hear the murmur of human speech and the roll and click of machinery. The latter sounds were significant—they were those of a printing-press.

Among the voices which came to him, recognisably enough, though their words were almost indistinguishable, was that of the American Lorimer, and that of the singular being for whom the Medes and Persians possessed such an extraordinary fascination. Lucius Shand nodded, as if satisfied with his discovery, released his tool, pocketed his knife, closed his dark lantern, and crept back to the mouth of the tunnel.

Reaching the exit he stepped out into the open air, filled his lungs, lifted to his lips a regulation whistle, and would have blown a call. But something glittering passed before his vision and touched him, coldly, menacingly, on the temple.

"Stop!" he was told, in feminine accents, tremulous yet determined, "or you are a dead man."

Lucius Shand glanced from a corner of his eye and beheld the woman whom he had first seen a few hours earlier. She was levelling a nickel-plated revolver, her finger on the trigger. The surgeon smiled.

"Excuse my not raising my hat to a lady," he said cheerfully, "but you might mistake the object of the movement, and I should just like you to note a last message or two. Give my kind regards to Detective-Sergeant Williamson, who is outside in charge of a body of police. Ask him also to remember me to the superintendent. My will is at the Union Bank and I am insured in the Law Life Association. Please mention this to Williamson. You will have an opportunity immediately, for when I blow this whistle, as I am about to do, you will all be promptly arrested. The house and garden is surrounded and no one can possibly escape, either yourself or the gentlemen in the underground printing-works. Whether I succeed in whistling or not, your shot will summon my colleagues. So, good-bye."

At the conclusion of which lengthy and phlegmatic speech the surgeon lifted the whistle again towards his lips.

A dozen expressions—of amazement, incredulity, reluctant admiration—had been chasing one another across his captor's face. She hesitated.

"Let me think," she faltered; "give me a minute." The surgeon acquiesced, the whistle poised an inch from his moustache.

"You—you can't want to die!" said the other at length, "what if I make a proposal?"

"Make it," responded Lucius Shand, calmly.

The woman drew a deep breath.

"I must—I will," she answered, "save one man, my husband—Andrew Millican. He is down there with the rest. Will you let me call him out and get him away? You shall have all but him."

"I have told you," said the surgeon, "that the house and garden is surrounded and that no one could escape. But since your husband is mad, the law will not seek to punish him." There was an inflection of satire in Lucius Shand's tones.

"Fool!" retorted the other, "my husband is not mad. The idea of getting him to seem so as a blind to our—our doings, is my uncle's, the man who calls himself Dr. Lorimer. He taught Andrew to sham lunacy. The mock 'escape' last week was only to give the neighbours a safe view of our proceedings. Come, is it a bargain?—if not, I will shoot you and take my chance of getting them all away before your comrades can arrive. You wouldn't be the first man I've dropped—I was bred out West, when life was cheaper there than now, I nearly shot you when I saw you get over the wall in the moonlight. I thought it was you—I've suspected you all along."

The surgeon made a gesture of resignation. "You have my word," he said; "unlock that toy and give it to me, though."

Mrs. Andrew Millican obeyed reluctantly, and, putting her in front of him, the surgeon re-entered the tunnel, guiding her by his dark lantern—he had tossed the revolver into the distant shrubbery. At the trap-door his companion knelt

down and raised it by a lever Lucius Shand had not noticed. The sound of the machinery and the voices became clearer.

"Andrew," she called, "come and take the dog off the chain for me. He's restless and barks a lot—there may be someone prowling about. He won't let me, and you're the only one that can manage him."

There was a shout below, a grumbled reply, and a man began to mount a ladder-stair. It was Andrew Millican, the sham lunatic. Lucius Shand backed into a side tunnel and watched them in the light that streamed from the trap. A moment they talked together, then the door was lowered, he heard a sound of footsteps, and there ensued a sudden silence. The surgeon leant out into the main tunnel and cast the rays of his lantern to and fro—the "lunatic" and his wife had vanished.

Shrugging his shoulders, Lucius Shand ran into the garden above and blew his whistle. Instantly half a dozen constables and detectives scrambled over the walls and dashed towards the place whence the sound came.

A moment more and the mysterious vault had been raided, and the surgeon's perspicacity was repaid by the capture of four or five well-known English and American criminals and a priceless plant for the manufacture of forged bank-notes.

The piece of paper that had so riveted Lucius Shand's attention in the parlour of Rose Cottage had been a sample sheet of the unmistakable water-marked, "deckle-edged," Bank of England "flimsy"—the possession of which, in imitation or original, is illegal and almost impossible. The deductions from its presence there had been but a matter of mental arithmetic to Lucius Shand's brilliant brain, and would have quite sufficed—had that been necessary—to protect his judgment from the influence of Andrew Millican's undoubtedly clever acting.

The garden of Rose Cottage was literally honeycombed with tunnels and one in particular led to the cellar of a house in a neighbouring street—a house rented by an agent of the

organs. It was doubtless by this avenue that Mrs. Millican and her husband had effected their escape.

The public heard nothing of Dr. Shand's exploit in connection with the discovery of the Lorimer gang. When Detective-Sergeant Williamson went into the box to give evidence before the stipendiary magistrate at the preliminary hearing he began his testimony with the stereotyped "from information received, your worship."

Mrs. Millican and her husband were never brought to trial, and, on the whole, the surgeon did not regret it—somehow, he was sorry for the lady from the West. Also, he kept his own counsel with regard to the incident of the revolver, and the worthy Williamson was never able to extract from him a clear opinion as to what had become of the "lunatic."

Some year or two later a great American police authority visited the town of which Division B. forms a part, and to him Lucius Shand happened to tell the story. The surgeon's description enabled the other to identify the "lunatic" and his wife, and Lucius Shand learnt the real history of "Mrs. Millican."

She was the daughter of an ex-senator of the United States—a man who had grown rich "out West"—and had been the idol of a mining town, a crack shot, a fearless horsewoman, a "belle" for whose favours many had fought and died. In the end she had eloped with an actor, been disinherited by her father and disappeared, her husband abandoning the stage. Ultimately both had become known to the United States police as associates of a daring gang of criminals, into whose power the actor had unluckily fallen. Its chief was actually the profligate brother of her own father.

"Not that Eulalie Summers—for that was her maiden name"—said the surgeon's informant, "is at all likely to have stooped to anything low-down herself. No, sir, she wasn't the sort. I guess she just stuck by her husband."

"She certainly did!" retorted Lucius Shand; "I can feel that revolver muzzle against my temple now."

[Next week: "THE STRANGE STAIN ON THE TWEED CAP."



Lucius Shand backed into a side tunnel and watched them in the light that streamed from the trap.



The Golden Key.

How a Woman Fought for her Lover.

"SYBIL!"

No answer.

"Sybil," in a louder tone.

Still no answer.

Lord Morris swore softly to himself.

"I will put an end to this once and for all," he muttered, swinging round and striding along the deck of the *Golden Butterfly*—the prettiest houseboat down all the reach at Henley. "When a regiment of soldiers can hear my voice above the din of a battle, I don't expect to find it drowned by a whisper; confound the fellow's impudence." And running down the ladder he looked round for a boathook and proceeded to lay hold of a punt in which a remarkably pretty girl was reclining with a long-limbed, sunburnt individual, who was apparently engaged in telling her fortune by the lines on her hands.

Both were totally unconscious that anyone was calling, and equally indifferent to the gossip and conjecture which was passing from mouth to mouth among the fashionably-dressed assemblage half hidden behind the gay barrier of pink and white geraniums.

The unexpected movement of the punt made the lovers look up.

"What idiots we were not to go off," exclaimed Lady Sybil, as she caught her father's glance and winced involuntarily. "I shall now have a quarter of an hour's lecture on the impropriety of being with you, on my duties as hostess, and then be packed off to entertain those highly respectable mummies for the rest of the afternoon."

The punt was alongside by this time.

"You are deaf to-day," Lord Morris said grimly as he held out his hand and assisted his daughter to alight. "I have been calling you for the last ten minutes. Mr. Douglas, I am sure you will excuse my daughter."

Something very much like a wink trembled on the Lady Sybil's eyelid. She looked down at her companion—smiled—gave a hopeless little shrug of her shoulders, and meekly followed her father inside.

"You are incorrigible," observed Lord Morris, indicating a chair with a sweep of his hand, and occupying another himself. "How many times have I stated my objection to your encouragement of that man. First you ask him to lunch without even consulting me. And then you go off with him in that extremely conspicuous manner, leaving your guests to entertain themselves. If it had been any other man, I would not have minded so much, but—"

Lord Morris broke off abruptly. Something in his daughter's clear, challenging eyes disconcerted him.

"I know what you are going to say," Lady Sybil interposed drily. "The sooner you change your opinion of Mr. Douglas the better, father; a son-in-law with whom you were at daggers drawn would be a nuisance."

"Don't talk nonsense!" exclaimed Lord Morris sharply. "I am in no humour for joking."

The girl's pretty mouth relaxed into a smile.

"I am not joking," she said, with a determined shrug.

"I am going to marry Mr. Douglas."

For a moment father and daughter faced each other defiantly. As usual, the girl ended with victory. She looked so cool and collected, sitting there with her legs crossed and her hands

clasped tightly round her knees; her dark eyebrows were slightly raised, and her parted lips revealed a pretty set of strong white teeth. "I am going to marry Mr. Douglas," she repeated.

Lord Morris rose from his chair and took down a box of cigars from a small cabinet behind him.

"My dear child," he said, speaking over his shoulder, "your happiness is my chief consideration. I do not wish to thwart you. I do not wish to influence your decision unnecessarily, but I most emphatically do

not think that a poor and idle man like Mr. Douglas is the husband a girl in your position should choose. If he had any interest in life now—"

Lady Sybil sprang forward and laid her hand on her father's shoulder.

"Mr. Douglas has an interest in life, father," she cried, with unwonted eagerness. "He is going to stand for Parliament."

Lord Morris was a little taken aback.

"Stand for Parliament?" he echoed, with unspeakable contempt. "Douglas stand for Parliament? And where, may I ask, is he going to stand for?"

"For West Blankshire—Mr. Douglas is a Radical."

Lord Morris frowned.

"He will have some difficulty in winning that seat," he replied, with a dry laugh. "Girls are not supposed to know much about political matters, but it was West Blankshire which I represented in Parliament before I was raised to a peerage. Now Pelham has been nominated as the Conservative candidate. Do you imagine that an unknown man like Douglas would have the ghost of a chance against him? Do you imagine that a poor adventurer will be able to change a Conservative majority to a Radical one when opposed by my nominee, and, so far as that goes, my nephew and my heir? My dear, if you want an M.P. for a husband, why don't you marry your cousin? Nothing you could do would give your old father greater pleasure than that. You know how devoted Pelham is to you—"

"And I also know how much I abhor him," interposed Sybil, with an angry stamp. "But if Mr. Douglas stands—Mr. Douglas will win the seat. The majority of people have no politics. They go to the poll to vote for an individual, and not for a party programme or a creed."

Lord Morris regarded his daughter with a look of considerable surprise. Her words were heretical, her defiant attitude revealed an independent spirit, which pleased while it irritated him. He said nothing, however, and the girl continued:

"I tell you what," she said, "we will make a bargain. I will marry the new M.P. for Blankshire. If Mr. Douglas is returned, at least, you will acknowledge that he is a man of energy and capacity. If Pelham comes out at the head of the poll, then I will promise to do as you wish in the matter."

"I take you at your word," replied Lord Morris, quietly. The arrangement was not one of which he approved. The result of the election, however, was a certainty, and therefore he did not feel that he was leaving the choice of husbands to chance. Sybil, he believed, would be happier with Lord Pelham than with his political rival—this good-looking, good-for-nothing Douglas. No other consideration would have made it possible for him to countenance his daughter's caprice.

Standing on the lawn of the Isthmian Club later in the afternoon, Lady Sybil caught sight of Douglas piloting his punt towards the landing-stage. The bell was ringing to clear the course, and the bright flotilla of boats, which seemed indissolubly packed from bank to bank, slowly came apart in the middle and crushed together behind the piles.

"Ralf," she said, as he came up to her, "I want to speak to

you. Bring two chairs and sit here in the shade. Who cares whether Leander or Trinity Hall wins the race? Thames and London, is it? Well, it's all the same. You know what I said this morning? Marriage then was altogether out of the question. Now there is one chance. If you win your seat and get into Parliament, the governor has promised to say 'Bless you, my children.' If you don't, I shall have to marry someone else."

A bright look came into the man's face. He bent forward and whispered something in his companion's ear. Then they both laughed. Douglas was grave again the next moment.

"I feel more confident than ever now," he said; "but the odds against me are enormous. To win a seat in these days one has to spend money like water. Your cousin can afford to do things on a more generous scale than I can. After all, members of Parliament buy their seats like stalls at the opera."

There was a despondent ring in his voice. Lady Sybil noticed it—opening her blue eyes wide—and looking at him as if his words conveyed some new suggestion to her mind. There was a distinct sensation of fear. Suppose—it was not an unnatural supposition when she came to think the matter over—suppose, after all, Ralf was to be defeated. And she had given her word to her father.

An involuntary shudder escaped the girl. Was there nothing she could do to help? Nothing to avert her fate. She caught her underlip between her teeth bending her level brows with a visible effort to understand, to think the matter out.

Then an idea flashed across her. Why should she not supply the needful funds? How could she spend her money in a better way? A traitor to her father? Perhaps—but what was one vote more or less to the Government compared with her whole life's happiness? She felt that her lover's eyes were fixed upon her.

Before, however, she had time to speak, their *tête-à-tête* was interrupted. Ralf was carried off to be introduced to some influential member of the Government, and she was left alone with her half-formed plans filling her with a new enthusiasm. "Perhaps," mused the girl, "I had better not say anything about the matter to Ralf. He might refuse my assistance. Poverty makes men proud. But come what may he shall come out at the head of the poll."

When Lady Sybil made up her mind to do anything, grass was never allowed to grow under her feet. As a first step she invited herself to a friend's house in Blankshire, and set to work canvassing with indefatigable energy. She did not know exactly how to set about it, her ideas about Parliamentary matters were extremely vague. But she was pretty and attractive, and her pleasing gracious ways more than made up for her want of definite knowledge on political topics. Technicalities were easily avoided.

Her friends naturally supposed that she was canvassing on behalf of her cousin. She had not mentioned Ralf Douglas' name to them, but she had the satisfaction of finding that her efforts and solicitations on his behalf were having a marked effect upon his constituents. For a whole week she worked among them. Then she heard that Douglas was coming on the scene himself, and promptly retired.

A few days later she received a letter from him. "I don't know what has come over the people here," he said, "but there does not seem to be a Conservative among them. The poor are Radicals to a man. Someone seems to have been down here canvassing for me. Who ever they may be, I owe them an undying debt. The election will be held in a few days' time. I have not the least doubt now as to the result. My fondest ambition is to be realised, and at the same moment the sweetest little woman in the world will become mine."

In political circles small interest was taken in the election at West Blankshire. The county had returned Conservative members within the memory of the oldest inhabitant. It was true that since Mr. Blenkinsop's elevation to the peerage there was some chance of the majority being reduced, but Pelham Blenkinsop was generally admitted to be the best

man to step into his uncle's shoes. Conservatives felt no fear, and Radicals experienced no hope. Mr. Douglas' chances of obtaining the seat were too small to be taken seriously.

So everyone thought.

The day of the election came and went.

When the result of the poll became known the whole of the political world was thrown into a ferment. Columns in the papers were written about it. West Blankshire became the leading topic at the clubs, the most absorbing theme over the teacups. Ralf Douglas, the Radical candidate, had been returned by a narrow majority.

When Lady Sybil heard the result she could hardly believe her ears. Then she went almost mad with joy. The consciousness that it was all her doing filled her with a sense of pride and superiority. Ralf would now be happy. They would both be happy—and it was all due to her.

It was only a few days before she and her lover were to meet again. The interval, however, dragged itself away so slowly that the girl was half ill with excitement before a week had lapsed. At the end of that time they saw one another at Brighton.

Ralf Douglas was seated at a writing-table in the drawing-room of the Metropole. He looked up as the slim, graceful girl entered, and sprang to his feet with a little exclamation of joy.

They did not speak, only they clasped one another's hands and stood there looking into each other's eyes. The world seemed so bright to them. The sun was shining in the heavens, and there was evidence of it in their hearts. There was nothing left that they could wish for. Nothing they wanted but one another's love to fill their cup of happiness.

"I never knew," the man said at last, "what absolute contentment was until this moment. Anticipation and recollection were the only pleasures which I expected from actual realisation. Nothing ever tasted so good as it looked until now. Real untarnished happiness only comes once or twice in a man's life. What a surprising world we live in. All this which has come to us is due to the influence or secret work of some unknown individual—the man or woman, whoever it was, who canvassed for me."

Lady Sybil's eyes gleamed triumphantly. There was no longer any reason for concealing her part in the startling victory.

"Ralf," she cried, throwing back her head with a proud, glad gesture. "It was I who won the day for you. Not bad for little me, was it?"

"You!" incredulously, "why did you not tell me before, my darling?"

He let his eyes—big, grey, unfathomable eyes—wander over the lissome form before him. How happy the girl looked. How radiant her face was, flushing such pretty, varying tints from sheer excess of joy.

Her lips were trembling so that she could hardly speak.

"I thought you might object to using my money. And—oh! Ralf, I wanted you so very, very much to win."

She gave a little laugh of self-depreciation, but her sweet, violet eyes mirrored her delightful sense of triumph. Ralf bent over the girl, and dropped a kiss on her hair, stroking her cheek with his large,



cool hands. "You are the best little woman in the world," he said gratefully, "and the cleverest canvasser. Tell me what magic you employed?"

"A golden key will open every lock," the girl laughed. "I made them promise."

A vague fear shot through her companion, an unformed apprehension made the lines of his face harden.

"Sybil," he gasped, "for Heaven's sake, child, tell me what you mean?"

The light in Lady Sybil's eyes faded all away, the tender little smile disappeared, and a hot frightened blush flamed over the beautiful face.

She looked up terrified. How terrible Douglas looked at that moment. What had she done? What had she said? Ralf's face was white and drawn. His lips were trembling, his limbs felt numb and useless, his brain seemed to swim, and he put out his hand groping for support.

He spoke at last in a hoarse broken whisper. "Tell me," he gasped. White too, and a little dizzy, Lady Sybil took a step towards him.

"I don't know what you mean," she said, half defiantly. "You told me that seats had to be bought, and so I promised all the poor people a five-pound note if you got in. Why do you look at me like that? Oh, Ralf, what is the matter?"

Douglas reeled a little, covering his face with his hands. All his hope and his love died within him, and a great heart-broken sob escaped his lips.

The following week the papers announced the filing of a petition against the return of Mr. Ralf Douglas, the Radical member for West Blankshire, for corrupt practices and bribery.

"A woman all over," was the universal verdict when the whole story was known. T. L.



THE nurse and both grandmothers and all the great aunts have gone, and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Verdant are to spend their first night alone with their first-born, a lusty youth, now five weeks old. Mr. and Mrs. Verdant are nervous and anxious. The baby is serenely indifferent, and wholly non-committal as to the programme he has mapped out for himself.

"What if anything should happen?" says Mrs. Charles, for the nineteenth time, as she and Charles lie down for the night, but not "in peace to sleep."

"Oh, I expect he'll be all right," says Charles.

"You have everything where you can put your hand on it at a moment's notice?"

"Yes, dear."

"The paregoric, in case of colic, you know?"

"Yes, dear."

"And is his food for the night all ready?"

"Yes; it's all right."

"I wonder if there's spirit enough in the lamp to last all night?"

"Oh, yes; it's full."

"Oh, dear, I don't believe I left his bottle full of soda and water; and it must be left so to keep it sweet, mamma said. Do get up and see."

Charles gets up and finds the bottle all right. He lies down wearily. Silence for ten minutes; then—

"Charles, did mamma and the nurse say that his milk should be two-thirds or three-fourths water? I'm so afraid I've made a mistake. I've got it written down somewhere. Do get up and see! It's on a piece of paper in the left-hand small drawer of the dressing-table. I wouldn't make a mistake about his food for the world."

Charles reports that the milk should be about two-thirds water until baby is five or six weeks old.

"What if he should have the croup?" asks Mrs. Charles, with a gasp, at eleven o'clock.

"Babies of his age don't have croup."

"Are you sure?"

"The nurse said so."

"Oh, I'm so glad!"

At 11.30 Charles begins his first nap. At 11.35 his wife asks anxiously:

"Oh, Charles, do you think he's breathing all right?"

Charles' ear is held over the baby's red and wrinkled little mouth.

"Why, yes; I think so, dear."

"Oh, don't you know?"

"Why, yes; I feel quite sure."

"It seemed to me that he wasn't, and I was so worried! Charles, I should die if anything should happen to this baby! Do you think the room is quite warm enough? Do get up and look at the thermometer! *Babyhood* says the temperature should not be less than fifty for a young baby."

"It's just fifty-four," says Charles, as he stands enveloped in a blanket, night-lamp in hand, before the thermometer.

"See what time it is."

"Twenty minutes to twelve."

"He must have his bottle at twelve. We might as well get up now, so as to give ourselves plenty of time to get it ready carefully. Bring in the milk. I do wonder if that milkman does bring us milk from one cow. *Baby must not* have mixed milk."

At precisely twelve o'clock the inviting-looking rubber teat on baby's bottle is slipped between his red gums, and Charles drops down wearily.

"Mercy, Charles! You *almost* rolled on baby! I'm so afraid you *will* roll on him some night and *kill* him! Such things *have* happened. Why *doesn't* he take his supper?"

"He's asleep, I fancy."

"I wonder if he's well? Do bring the lamp!"

Charles brings the lamp.

"What makes him twitch his mouth and wrinkle up his forehead like that?"

"Oh, all babies do."

"I don't believe it. Oh, Charles, *shouldn't* you go for mamma?"

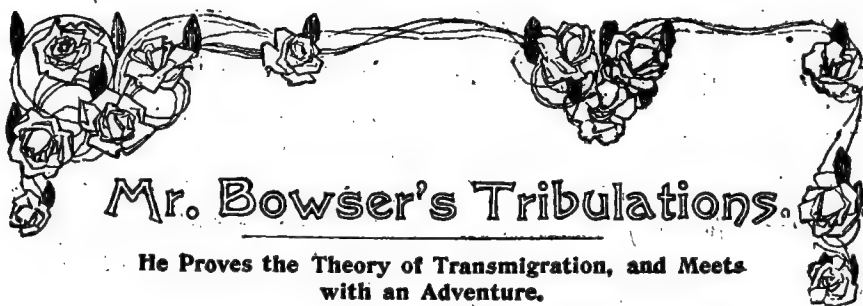
"Oh, no, dear; he's all right."

"Oh, I'm afraid he isn't! We should *never* forgive ourselves if anything happened to him. You'd *better* go for mamma" (who lives three miles away).

"It's nothing but a little pain."

"Oh, the poor, *poor* little, precious darling? Charles, get up and warm that paregoric, and light the fire in the range, and heat this flannel shawl *hot*, and be ready to go for mamma and the doctor at a *moment's* notice! I am so worried! You had better get Bridget up. We may need her help any moment. Bring me the powder-box and two small and one large safety pins. Light the gas. Look at the thermometer again. Only *forty-nine*! Make up the fire at once. Don't take your eyes off baby for an instant while I dress."

The grey dawn of the morning finds Mr. and Mrs. Verdant and Bridget hovering over the kitchen range. They have been hovering there most of the night. But one person in that anxious household has slept sweetly and peacefully, and that person is—the baby. O. P. W.



Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

He Proves the Theory of Transmigration, and Meets
with an Adventure.

MR. BOWSER had seemed absent-minded at dinner, and for half an hour afterwards he smoked his cigar in silence and took no interest in his evening paper. He finally aroused himself with a start and said:

"Mrs. Bowser, I want to talk with you on a very serious matter, and I trust I may have your serious attention. A man from Liverpool came into the office to-day and had a pug dog with him, and, do you know, I recognised in that dog an old and dear friend of mine who died years ago?"

"So you have got back to that nonsense, have you?" she replied. "It is only a few months ago that you were talking transmigration and got bitten by the cat and annoyed the cook so much that she left next day. Why can't you let such subjects alone?"

"So you call the theory of transmigration nonsense?" he sharply inquired, as he turned on her.

"Of course I do. At least, it is a theory so absurd that no sensible person will waste any time over it."

"Is it nothing to you, Mrs. Bowser, whether your soul passes into the body of a dove or a dog after death? If it isn't, it's something to me what becomes of mine. I don't hanker to be a hippopotamus. This theory of transmigration is gaining ground every day, and millions of people already believe in it."

"Well, if they want to believe in such rubbish let them do it. I'm not going to."

"Rubbish! Rubbish! By what right do you call the belief of 30,000,000 people rubbish? There is either good foundation for this theory or else all these people are fools. How can you say what becomes of your soul after death?"

"How can you?" she queried.

"I can't exactly, and yet when I look into the face of a pug dog and behold the features of a dear old playmate, Tom Watkins—his eyes, his smile—it goes to convince me that there is a great deal more in this theory than I have hitherto accepted."

"I trust that your old friend was well and that you enjoyed his call," quickly observed Mrs. Bowser.

"Oh, you do! That's you all over! I never begin to talk with you on any matter of deep interest without your trying to belittle it. Woman, here and now I boldly announce myself a transmigrationist, and if you have got any sense in your head I can prove the theory to you inside of an hour! Yes, I can do it inside of a minute! Look at that cat!"

The family cat had just come in from the back yard and was sitting up with a look of innocence in her face. Mrs. Bowser regarded her for a few moments and then said:

"It's our old cat right enough."

"Yes, but whom does she remind you of? By thunder, but it's strange I never noticed the likeness before! Mrs. Bowser, as true as you live, the soul of your sister Hannah, who died three years ago, passed into that cat! Look at her, I say! If that isn't Hannah's expression to a T, I'll eat my hat."

"You must be crazy! She looks like any other cat, and that's all there is about it. You can see to what silly things your theory leads."

"And you see no resemblance?" he asked.

"Of course not."

"Then it's because your obstinacy won't permit you to. Hannah's soul went into that cat as sure's you're Mrs. Bowser, and that's why she's always been as fond of us as she has."

That's only one case, however. All human souls do not pass into animals, of course. Some of them pass into other people. When I die, my soul may pass into that of some babe who will grow up to be a celebrated poet or philosopher."

"Or a rag dealer or a knife grinder," added Mrs. Bowser.

He was about to resent the sneer when the cook came up and said there was a tramp at the back door who wanted money and refused to go away.

"Perhaps it's someone into whom the soul of one of your old friends has passed," suggested Mrs. Bowser as Mr. Bowser started downstairs. "If it proves to be so, you will, of course, use him very tenderly."

He turned and glared at her and nodded his head in an ominous way, but she had given him an idea he meant to work on. At the door he found a big, burly tramp who was a believer in the "rights of man," and who lost no time in saying:

"Why should I have to sleep on the grass under a tree while you occupy a hair mattress in a luxurious bedroom? I want the price of a night's lodging."

"And you shall have it," replied Mr. Bowser, as he walked the man slowly down to the gate to be out of earshot of the house. "You have arrived at an opportune moment. Have you ever heard of the theory of transmigration?"

"Never."

"Well, it's the idea that when a person dies his soul passes into the body of someone else. Turn to the light and let me get a square look at you."

"No tricks, governor. You'll have to look out if you rile me."

"There will be no tricks. You strangely remind me of a boy named Joe Davis I used to know years ago. He died when he was fifteen. I am wondering—"

"If his soul passed into my body? What sort of a feller was he, governor?"

"A good boy. Yes; he was truly good and liberal-hearted."

"Then you needn't wonder any longer. I'm your old friend Joe. You've hit me off to a nail. I knew you the minute you came to the door. Shake hands, governor, and if you don't mind I'll take that half-crown you borrowed of me just before I died."

"But I—I didn't borrow any half-crown from you!" stammered Mr. Bowser, as he realised that his theory was growing on his hands. "Come to look at you again, I don't think you are my old playmate."

"None of that, old man!" growled the tramp. "I'm the soul of Joe Davis, and I want that half-crown. Pay up!"

"I think there's some mistake. You are too old, and your nose is too big, and your eyes—"

"No mistake, governor, and don't you try to balk an old playmate. You borrowed that half-crown from me to go to the circus, and I want it back."

Mr. Bowser started for the house, but the tramp seized him and gave him a shake that rattled his teeth. Then the conflict was on, and as Mrs. Bowser, the cook and the cat got outdoors there was a mix up in the moonlight that ended with the tramp leaping the fence and making off and Mr. Bowser slowly getting up and glaring round and asking what had happened.

"Oh, nothing much!" replied Mrs. Bowser. "You just met the soul of an old playmate which had passed into the body of a tramp."

"And—and—"

"And the soul threw you down and rolled you on the grass till you'll smell of new mown hay for a month to come. Better come in and go to bed."

M. QUAD.



The Shadow Show.



Things are not Always what they Appear to be.

"Never believe anything that you hear, and only half that you see," Jack's father had told him, years ago.

Now Jack had, so far, always acted up to that piece of advice, and had got on very comfortably in consequence.

Then, one fine day, or rather night, returning to town after a lengthy absence, he rushed up to his sweetheart's house, and saw a picture reflected upon the blind.

"Only believe half that you see."

This is what Jack saw, shadowed upon the blind.

Two faces in profile, a man's and a girl's. The faces close together, as close as it is possible for two faces to be, lip pressed against lip, and chin against chin.

Clearly Jack saw no need to enter that room to know what was going on inside.

"Only believe half that you see."

Nonsense! "Seeing is believing," and here was a case in point. There could be no room for doubt. It was plain as daylight.

He knew the girl. He thought he knew the man. However, he would make sure. He had no desire to be unfair.

He gave a thundering rat-a-tat at the door. Maisie herself came to open it. When she saw who it was, she gave a little cry and promptly threw herself into his arms.

Jack was taken aback. He was not prepared for such duplicity. He had expected her to start, and tremble, and shrink in guilty terror at sight of him.

Yet she who, but a moment ago, had pressed her lips to those of his loathly rival, was now ready and even eager to shower kisses upon him, Jack, the man she had so basely deceived.

He disengaged himself sternly from her embrace.

"Why, Jack, darling, what's the matter? Aren't you glad to see me?"

Really, it was superb, that tone of simulated affection.

"You have a visitor, I think?" he said, stiffly.

Her face clouded.

"Yes, that Mr. Sampson. Isn't it a bore? Mamma isn't well, so I've had to entertain him."

"You appear to have succeeded pretty well," retorted Jack, with grim emphasis.

"Oh, yes," said Maisie cheerfully, "he's not bad company."

"Evidently not."

"But I wish he'd go now," with a loving glance at Jack.

"Let's see if we can't get rid of him."

"Pray don't trouble to do that. I am not going to stay."

"Not going to stay? Oh Jack, and you've only just come!"

Her disappointment was beautifully done.

"May I ask what is your object in keeping up this farce?" asked Jack impatiently.

"Farce? What farce? I don't understand. How strange you are Jack."

"What a superb actress you are, Miss Day."

"Why Jack that's the first time you've called me Miss Day since we became engaged. And whatever do you mean by saying I'm a superb actress?"

"Surely you deserve the term?"

"I don't in the least know what you mean," returned Maisie with a pretty assumption of anger. "You're not at all nice to-night, Jack. You're changed."

"Changed! I changed! Ha—ha, that's good—very good!" And Jack burst into a sardonic laugh.

"You—you can't have been—but no it isn't possible. You've never done such a thing in your life. And yet—Oh, Jack, tell me—you—you haven't been—drinking?"

The last words came in a horrified whisper.

At this point Jack I regret to say, completely lost his temper.

"For heaven's sake, let's have no more of this fooling!" he cried. "If you've been unfaithful and fickle, you can't help it, perhaps. It may be your nature. But why add deceit to your other offences?"

"Jack, you must be mad to say such things to me."

"And you must be mad to try to keep up the deception. Let me assure you, it is useless. I know everything. I have seen everything."

"Know what? Seen what?"

"In the future," continued Jack, not heeding the interruption, "in future when you receive gentlemen visitors, let me advise you to place the lamp in such a position that your shadows do not fall upon the blind."

The next moment the front door had slammed behind Jack, and Maisie was left standing in the hall alone.

On the day following the little episode above related, Jack received a small package in Maisie's handwriting. It contained her engagement ring, and various other articles of jewellery with which he had presented her, accompanied by a formal little note, beginning "Dear Mr. Day" and signed "Yours sincerely, Maisie Day." The note merely stated that, after what had passed between them on the previous evening, their engagement, presumably, was to be considered at an end.

Jack acknowledged receipt of the package in similar terms.

Thereupon he did not see Maisie again for nearly three months. They had many friends in common, however, and it was inevitable that sooner or later they should meet.

They did meet, sooner than Jack had expected.

The Jones' were "at home" to their particular friends in a promiscuous kind of way, every Sunday evening. Now young Jones was a particular friend of Jack's, and Miss Jones was a particular friend of Maisie's. It was at the Jones' that they met, one Sunday evening.

It was really very awkward. At least, so Jack found it. Maisie, apparently, didn't mind in the least. She shook hands with Jack, smiled at him politely, and began chatting pleasantly, without turning a hair.

"Just as if I had never been anything more to her than a casual acquaintance," Jack thought, bitterly.

Presently he cast a furtive glance at the third finger of her left hand, it was unoccupied.

"They're not engaged yet, then," reflected Jack. "I suppose, in common decency, she'll wait a month or two."

Maisie noted the look and read the thought.

"No, we're not engaged yet," she said, and began to laugh in a heartless manner.

Young Jones was leaning against the piano. He stood between the window and the tall standard lamp that lighted the room, and his shadow fell upon the white blind.

Maisie rose, suddenly, from the chair next to Jack which she was occupying, and, with a certain deliberation, walked up to the piano and began talking to Jones.

Suddenly there was a shriek of laughter from Fanny Jones.

"For goodness' sake, don't move," Maisie whispered to her companion. The latter stared at her in surprise, but obeyed.

Maisie, too, stood motionless.

"The blind! That picture! Look! Did you ever see anything so funny?" gurgled Fanny.

They followed the direction of her finger, and immediately her mirth became infectious.

There, clearly silhouetted upon the blind, they saw a touching picture.

It was the profile of Maisie and the profile of Edgar Jones in close proximity, such close proximity that they appeared glued against lip, and nose against nose.

Jack stared at the shadows in amazement, then turned his dazed eyes upon their solid counterparts.

Young Jones and Maisie were chatting together in apparent unconcern. Their faces, seen in profile, overlapped by the fraction of an inch. Yet there was a decorous space between them, for Maisie was standing at least half a yard further away from the blind. But, if the shadows were to be believed, Maisie and Edgar, at that moment, were locked in a passionate embrace.

Then the full meaning of what he saw flashed upon him.

What a fool he had been!

And Maisie, would she ever forgive him?

Amid the general hilarity, his confusion and distress escaped unnoticed. Everyone was eager to try the effect of his own shadow in comical combination with another, preferably of opposite sex.

Presently, in the midst of an amazing series of silhouette tableaux, Mrs. Jones exclaimed—

"Good gracious, I never thought of it! The shadows can be seen from the outside!"

"And at the present moment," said Mr. Jones with a chuckle, as he peeped out of the window, "we are edifying an appreciative crowd of small boys."

"To whom it probably doesn't occur that shadows have length and breadth, but no thickness," put in Maisie, with a significant glance at Jack. Then, in a whisper, she added—

"You don't deserve it, but I've decided to forgive you."

GRETE HAHN.



Coals of Fire.

How a Man Lost his Money and a Wife.

THE night was closing down over London. It was cold, and the biting wind whirled down the lighted pavement of Regent Street and blew the rags of smoke—only one could not see that—from the face of the waxing moon, which began to show faintly above the myriads of coloured lights.

Halford turned up his coat collar and thrust his hands into his pockets, and bent forward at an angle against the wind. He walked swiftly, recklessly, never feeling it as he roughly jostled passer-by after passer-by, nor heeding the sharp glances that were directed at him by the disgruntled ones. His brain was in a whirl. He was conscious of a dim desire to get among people—a crowd, noise, excitement. It was the tumult within calling for response in his environment.

Emma Harrington had just refused him. It was not the first time, but it was vastly different from the other times. On this occasion it had been borne in upon him that she meant what she said. Emma was a typine, a grey-eyed mite who lived in Highbury, and her ways were so quiet, and her speech was so gentle that when she said no at first, Halford had never dreamt that she meant it. Perhaps it is true that she was in the wrong not to have made her refusal more decided, but something must be set down to Halford's overwhelming conceit; anyhow, there it was—he had been going on loving her, even more and more, until when the final wrench came it seemed to Halford that there was nothing left in life for him.

Of course Halford was not a man of decided character or of wide experience, or his better sense would have asserted itself. He was of the emotional type, rather than the intellectual, and an emotional person's strength is just his weakness in his most dangerous mood—the chain is no stronger than its weakest link. He was a clerk in one of the wholesale houses of the city at a salary of £180 a year.

Halford was not angry with Emma. He was filled with wonder at her strange perverseness, and with pity for himself. Also there was a rage of blind jealousy within him, for he reasoned that if she did not love him well enough to marry him it must be because she loved somebody else better.

But nobody could love her better than he, he was certain of that. Why, he would die for her! That would prove his devotion. She would be sorry then. An image of his dead body, and Emma weeping, identifying it, filled his eyes with tears. Go to! He would commit suicide.

He really meant it, for he loved her sincerely, and she had given him a mortal hurt. He turned abruptly and walked a little further with

the intention of going towards the Embankment.

Suddenly he reflected that he had a hundred pounds in the bank. She might as well have that, so, luckily happening to see a lawyer's office open, he went in. The business took nearly an hour.

He came out of the office feeling decidedly better. The necessary attention to details had diverted his mind from his trouble. It occurred to him that he ought to leave the world decently attired. He walked to his lodgings, bathed and shaved, and exchanged his working clothes for his frock-coat and its necessary accompaniments.

He then started off towards Waterloo Bridge, which he found deserted, except for a man pacing up and down on the same pavement as he himself was. Something in his air arrested Halford's none too alert attention. He was shabby and sad looking, but bore certain marks of refinement. Halford felt vaguely annoyed; somehow he resented a stranger's presence when he should do the deed. This was foolish, as he presently reflected. It would be well to have a witness, they would find him the more quickly.

He approached the wall and stood looking down at the danging of the lights on the dark water. He shivered a little; it was very cold. The stranger paced back and forth behind him for a time, then stopped. "What are you doing there?" he said harshly.

"Waiting," returned Halford, with simplicity.

"Waiting for what?"

"Waiting until there's no one about."

"So am I," the stranger returned. He knocked his cigar against the wall and replaced it between his lips. "I am going to jump over. Now don't you betray me," he said quickly, "for if you should you would merely cause me the trouble of making another journey."

"I have no intention of betraying you," Halford said in a suppressed tone. "That is just what I am going to do myself."

The two stared at each other. Finally the stranger ventured: "What for?"

"What are you doing it for?" retorted Halford.

"I have no hesitation in telling you. I am suffering from a lingering and incurable disease. It not only makes me wretched, but unfit for work. I have no means and I haven't any desire to become a public beneficiary, so I'm taking this way out of it." A pause, then he added, "One confidence deserves another."

"Oh," said Halford, with a painful effort, "same old trouble—a girl."

"Thrown you over?"

Halford nodded.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing, only she says she doesn't care for me."

"Oh, don't you believe it. Never say die."

"No; it's no use," Halford responded drearily. "I ought to have seen it long ago, only I was such an ass."

"My boy, you'll forget her in a month. Go and have a glorious old spree, and you'll be all right."

Halford shook his head. But he had got started to talking and the rest of his tale came forth without much difficulty. The stranger was soon in possession of the facts of his bequest to Emma. After he had finished the man stood looking thoughtfully at Halford.

"Five feet eight," he murmured, eye to eye with him, "medium complexion, brown hair, blue eyes, moustache, weight about the same as mine— What's the use," he said, "of giving her all that money and making her feel sorry she didn't take you, for nothing? I'll tell you a trick worth two of that. Nobody here knows me. Change clothes with me—you've papers on to identify you, I suppose. I'll jump over without witnesses. When they find me I'll be changed so they couldn't tell me from you. You go somewhere and keep quiet for a month or two till it's all blown over; then come out and claim her while her remorse and gratitude are at high tide."

"How about the money?"

"Do you care for that—you'd get it, anyhow."

"No, but suppose she shouldn't be glad to see me?"

"Is there any danger of that?"

"N-no; I don't think she realised what she was doing; she would be glad to have me come back if she once thought I was dead."

"Well, try it, anyway; it can't do any harm."

"I will," said Halford, and they shook hands.

The two men retired to a lodging-house and exchanged clothing. Then Halford, suddenly feeling very queer,

sat down on a bench and watched the other man go out through the door. The resemblance to himself, back view, was not reassuring. He was conscious of distinct relief that his suicide was to be by proxy.

Halford hid himself in a quiet lodging in a back street to await the turn of events. He was interested in reading the newspaper accounts of his disappearance, and his bequest to Emma furnished material for two columns in the papers. But the supplementary tale of the finding of his dead body was withheld.

The little money he had with him tided him over the first few days but at last he was obliged to earn something, and his shabby garb found him an obscure place behind the counter of a shabby grocer's shop. He hated the work and found himself desperately homesick for the comparatively magnificent surroundings of his former position.

A fortnight passed; he began to venture about the city a little. He did not dare to go near Emma's home, feeling less and less sure of his welcome, even had the long-hoped-for identification taken place. But he tried to catch a glimpse of her.

The meeting came about quite unexpectedly after all, one Sunday in Hyde Park. He saw her while she was at some distance, walking with a man of his own height dressed in black.

Halford did not know him, but was sure he had seen him before. He noticed with pain that their understanding of each other was evidently perfect. Nevertheless, he went toward her boldly. She raised her eyes. Her face turned white and she caught at her escort's arm. "Emma!" said Halford.

"I—I—you have the advantage of me, sir," she faltered.

"Emma!" he repeated, in a beseeching tone. A masculine voice cut in roughly.

"Confound your impudence! What do you mean by speaking to my wife?"

Halford looked at him squarely for the first time. That comprehensive glance took in also his own best hat, tie, and broadcloth coat. Both men took a step backward. The one muttered an oath. The other's jaw dropped. A moment they stood so, then Emma's voice broke the spell. "Oh, George, please take me away!"

A party of tourists, a dozen in all, came up behind them laughing and chattering. They bore them past and left Halford standing alone.

"Well, upon my word!" said Halford.

JULIAN STANFORD.

THE CAUSE OF THE GREAT COMMOTION.

"WHAT is it?"

"Anybody been run over?"

"Is it a man in a fit?"

High above the ceaseless rumble and roar of traffic rose human voices in anxious inquiry, and the dense throng grew denser still. It was just before sunset, and the mighty heart of the business centre throbbed with the feverish energy that marked the closing hours of another day of toil and the hurrying home of restless, eager thousands.

The swiftly moving streams of humanity that are wont to meet in eddying whirls in this busy vortex and then diverge and move onward again, each in its destined course, had suddenly become blocked, and chaos reigned.

Pushed towards the common centre by the ever-hurrying throngs afoot, in carriages and in buses, and unable to extricate themselves, men, women and children gasped for breath, and the crowd in the streets and on the pavement overflowed into the alleys and surged hither and thither, like the resistless ebb and flow of a mighty sea.

A policeman on the outskirts of the dense throng climbed a lamp-post, and from his elevated position surveyed the scene.

"What's the matter?" inquired a hundred voices as he climbed down.

"I don't know," he answered, and, with gloomy, lowering brow, he strode across the street, disappeared down a short flight of stairs, from which a few moments later he emerged wiping his mouth, and in the same stern, uncompromising way he walked on farther, and set a fire alarm going.

Meanwhile the surging multitude grew every moment more inextricable.

Something must be done.

Fiercely elbowing his way through the crowd, a newspaper reporter at last was seen bearing down towards the centre of the compact mass. His hat was off, his hair was flying in the breeze, and his face was deathly pale; but with set teeth and dilated nostrils he pushed his way along, thrusting to the right and left everyone who opposed his progress.

Reaching the centre of the throng, he seized two individuals by their arms, and in the same resolute, fearless way, opened a passage for them to the outside; and, as if by magic, the vast concourse dissolved—the converging streams of humanity whirled and eddied as before, and the business-heart of the great city throbbed again.

The reporter had conjectured rightly. The blockade was caused by two women who had met in the exact centre of the street and stopped to tell each other the troubles they were having with their nurse-girls.

NEW COMPETITION.START TO-DAY.

NAME HUNTING COMPETITION.

NAMES OF BRITISH AND IRISH RIVERS.

First Prize - - £10. Second Prize - - £2.

Third to Sixth Prizes - - £1 each.

ALL COUPONS APPEAR IN SHORT STORIES.

Below will be found fifteen sets of words, each set describing the name of a river in the United Kingdom.

Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those rivers you can discover. If you can't find all, put down as many as you can.

Note These Facts. . .

- Names must be written in ink.
- Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
- When you have filled up your list, cut it out and keep it by you until we tell you to send it in.
- You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
- In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.
- No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and those selected as winners may be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition.

The first prize of £10 will be given to the reader from whom we receive coupons containing the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

FIRST LIST.

Cut to edge→

Example:

To flow gently..... Ouse.

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 1. A melody | 1 |
| 2. To annoy | 2 |
| 3. Proclamation | 3 |
| 4. A mechanical contrivance for changing a circular motion into an alternate one..... | 4 |
| 5. Woollen cloth..... | 5 |
| 6. To fly rapidly..... | 6 |
| 7. For what reason | 7 |
| 8. Out of | 8 |
| 9. A delightful region | 9 |
| 10. Emblem of Innocence | 10 |
| 11. A light, small carriage | 11 |
| 12. Next after third | 12 |
| 13. A prong | 13 |
| 14. One who subdues | 14 |
| 15. The seed of the pine | 15 |

Name.....

Address.....



MR. BATESON'S PATTERNS.

How Some Letters were Recovered by a Clever Trick.

"WHAT makes you look so serious this morning, little woman? Been getting too deep into debt with Madame—? If so, let me know the amount, and you shall have a cheque."

The speaker was an elderly man, who looked what he was—a City magnate, and the lady to whom his remark was addressed—his wife—was many years his junior.

"You're too good to me, Robert. No; it's not debt, but desire, if you must know," with a little laugh.

"And what is it you have set your heart on this time? Something in the way of diamonds, eh?"

"No, dear; nothing so extravagant as that. But you know that new Indian depot in Oxford Street? Well, when I was there yesterday they showed me some lovely new stuffs they had just had over, and I thought—"

"Why, surely you have as many dresses as a woman can possibly want, haven't you?"

"Yes, dear, dresses, but this isn't quite the same thing; it is more fit for a boating costume, and I thought as we have accepted the Lewis's invitation for their river party next week, it would be just the very thing, and it's not dear—at least not very—only fifteen guineas for the costume complete, and oh, Robert, it is just lovely. They wanted to send it over to me to see the effect; one can't tell in a shop, you know."

"And I hope you told them to do nothing of the kind. I was going to speak to you about this river party. I am not at all sure I shall be able to go, and, of course, you—"

"Oh, I am sorry; but if you really can't go, I must go alone—I wouldn't miss it for worlds. I hear it's going to be an awfully good thing, finishing up with fireworks and a dance on the lawn in the evening; and I did so want to have that dress, if only I might—"

"I don't mind you having the dress in the least—"

"Oh, you old dear!"

"Perhaps you will be good enough to allow me to finish the sentence. I was going to say I don't in the least mind you having the dress, if you have set your heart upon it; but I do very much object to your seeing so much of Mrs. Lewis and her set. They are not my style at all, and I am old-fashioned enough not to like to see my wife paid court to by all sorts and conditions of men."

"You silly old goose, what can it matter when I don't care a straw for any of them like I do for you?" throwing her arms round his neck.

"Oh, I'm not jealous, if that's what you mean, but I tell you candidly I don't care about this Mrs. Lewis, and I should be very glad if you would see less of her."

"But, Robert, you yourself accepted her invitation for this river party, and I can't possibly back out of it now. Surely you could manage to get away from the horrid City for once. I should enjoy it ever so much more if you came."

"This was an artful move on the lady's part, and well she knew it, but it had the desired effect all the same."

"Well, well, my dear, I'll see about it, and you can speak

to me about this—this Indian dress by-and-bye. I—I hope it isn't anything very startling."

"It's just lovely, that's what it is—a kind of soft, clinging material that makes you feel as if you hadn't anything on."

"My dear Kitty! Well, I must be off now—bye, bye! Would you care to go to the theatre to-night? If so, I'll get a box for the new piece they're all talking about."

"I would rather have that dress, dear, if you don't mind."

Whether Mr. Robert Lambard heard or not is a matter of mystery; at any rate, he did not reply.

And here it may not be out of place to interpolate a few details as to Mr. and Mrs. Lambard. He, a rich man who had escaped the feminine toils until comparatively late in life, had made the lady's acquaintance at a fashionable seaside boarding-house, she being at the time a young and decidedly attractive-looking widow, whose husband had died two or three years previously, leaving her enough to live upon, as the saying is, but not what she considered sufficient to enjoy life.

Hence it was not to be wondered at that when the rich, elderly suitor declared himself she accepted him, not, however, without a pang of regret for a certain young gentleman between whom and herself some very amatory passages had taken place; but then he was poor and could not afford to keep her in the way she longed for, and had he not gone away after that mad proposal of his that they should marry and hope for the best. Since then she had never once heard from him.

Such was the position of affairs when Mr. Lambard came into her life and offered her marriage and a comfortable home with everything she could wish for, an offer which she felt it would be madness on her part to refuse.

Shortly after her engagement the favoured suitor had reappeared on the scene, and, although Mr. Lambard had not in any way attempted to pry into his fiancée's past history, he was, as is not uncommon with elderly gentlemen who marry young wives, of a decidedly jealous disposition, and he gave his lady-love to understand that the less she saw of the young gentleman in question the better, and that after they were once married he would not be amongst the regular visitors to his house.

To her credit, be it said, she had not attempted to renew the intimacy, and had done her best, so far as possible, to banish his remembrance from her mind, but on this particular morning, as it appeared, he was to be brought prominently before her.

In the interesting discussion over the breakfast table as to the forthcoming river party and the new dress to be worn on the occasion, she had omitted to open her letters, a little bundle of which lay by the side of her plate, and it was only when the closing of the street door announced that her husband had set out that she bethought herself of the unopened letters beside her.

Several of them were casually glanced at and laid aside, but suddenly her eye caught sight of what was evidently a familiar handwriting, and, hastily tearing open the envelope, she read the brief contents with anything but a look of pleasure on her handsome face.

"Dear Mrs. Lambard," it ran, "as nothing long remains a secret, I dare say you have heard ere this that I am engaged to be married to Miss Eva Meeking, and as some very foolish effusions of mine which may still be in your possession (unless you have already destroyed them) can no longer be of any interest to you, I should be glad if you would kindly hand them over, under sealed cover, to my friend Bateson, who has promised to make a duty call upon you to-day between three and four o'clock.

"Very sincerely yours,
"CLAUDE ANSTISS."

For a moment Mrs. Lambard sat with the letter before her, with a look on her face that did not imply she was at all pleased with what she had just read. Then she got up, stamped her foot, and said aloud:

"And this is the man who at one time professed himself so madly in love with me that nothing would do but he must terminate his existence, when I told him frankly that love in a cottage did not constitute my sole idea of happiness, and that it was better we should wait until his prospects should have improved.

"And then he went away," she continued, in a softened tone of voice, "and as he didn't write I thought he had forgotten all about me, and Mr. Lambard came along and proposed, and I accepted him, as most girls would, situated as I was, I suppose. And then Claude turns up again, declares that life is not worth living—and now, in less than six months, he coolly tells me that he is going to marry a chit of a girl without two ideas in her head, but a good many golden sovereigns in her pocket.

"Bah! All men are alike, after all. I've a good mind to send him back his letters without troubling his friend to come and fetch them at all. No, I won't. I will make him come and fetch them, that's what I'll do; it will serve him right, and make him see how contemptuously I regard his conduct."

Having come to this conclusion, she marched off to her boudoir, and, unlocking a drawer in her *escritoire*, took out a bundle of neatly tied up letters, indorsed "From Claude—July to September, 1890."

"It didn't last so very long, after all," was her mental comment, "but it was very pleasant whilst it did, and now it is all over between us he wants them back, does he, so as to blot out the remembrance, I suppose. Only to think a man who could write like this" (reading one of the letters) "could ever really forget—and I daresay he has written to her in much the same strain. Oh, what fools we women are, to be sure!

"What a joke it would be send them to her, the little chit, it would just serve him right, I declare it would," and then her mood changed and she found herself giving way to tears.

"If only he had written it might have been, oh, so different," she sobbed to herself, "and whose fault was it? Not mine anyway, but his, and he shall pay for it—he shall come and ask me for the letters himself," from which it will be seen that consistency was not Mrs. Lambard's strong point.

Punctually to the time appointed, the friendly envoy in the form of Mr. Algernon Bateson, an average specimen of the young man about town, presented himself, and having sent in his card, was soon admitted to the lady's presence.

"Pray sit down Mr.—Mr. Bateson."

Bashfulness had never been one of Mr. Bateson's failings, and he speedily came to the point without any beating about the bush.

"Anstiss told me you would be good enough to see me, and he said—"

"Yes."

There was something in the way the word was spoken that temporarily discomfited the young gentleman, but he speedily recovered his self-possession.

"He—he told me he had written to you, and—I—understood you would give me some letters of his which he imagined you would not care to keep now."

"Oh, he told you that, did he? And did he say why he did

not think it worth while to make a request for their return in person?"

"Well, 'pon honour, now, don't you know, rather awkward position for him, don't you know, and he thought—"

"That by deputing you he would save himself a bad quarter of an hour, I suppose."

"Well, you see—"

"Oh, yes, I quite appreciate his feelings; but you can tell him from me that, although I have no wish or desire to retain his letters, at the same time I am not prepared to give them up except to himself."

"I think you're rather hard upon him, you know; I do, really. Anstiss is a rattling good fellow, you know."

"That is a matter I do not care to discuss. You have my answer, and—"

"Where are you, Kitty?"

"Good gracious! My husband! Herc, put these letters in that box by your side. Quick, please!"

Mr. Bateson did as he was bid, the box in question being one of those artistic arrangements in which enterprising West-end tradesmen are in the habit of sending out patterns, and bore the name of the Indian Depot in Oxford Street, to which reference has already been made.

Mr. Lambard's face wore an ugly scowl on seeing a good-looking, well-dressed young man *tête-à-tête* with his wife.

"I did not know you were engaged, my dear."

Mr. Bateson rose as if to go.

"Oh, Robert, I am so glad you have come. This gentleman has called from the Indian Depot and brought me some more patterns of that material to see, but I told him I had not made quite up my mind, but that he might leave the box and I would think it over."

Mr. Bateson had in his time been in many predicaments, but it had never before come within the range of his experience to be coolly set down as a draper's, or costumier's assistant; and he was very nearly, as he said afterwards to his bosom friend Claude Anstiss, giving the thing away by an indignant disavowal, but an imploring glance from the lady restrained him.

The scowl which had gathered on Mr. Lambard's face gave way to a smile of satisfaction as he addressed himself to the young man.

"It's very good of your people to be so attentive," and then to his wife: "I don't think we need detain this gentleman, my dear. For wishing to give you a little pleasant surprise I called in at the place in Oxford Street on my way home, and was able to ascertain without much difficulty the particular costume you had set your heart upon, and, having done so, ordered them to send it round at once."

"On behalf of the firm, sir, I beg to thank you, and, as the lady will not require to see the patterns I have brought, I may as well take them away with me," suiting the action to the word by taking up the box and preparing to leave.

"Perhaps there are some patterns of trimmings there as well, and, if so, you had better leave it. I can send it back."

"No, madam, it contains nothing beyond samples of the material and a few personal memoranda of my own," and with a deferential bow he was gone before she could stop him.

"Oh, Robert, you are too good to me, you are indeed, and I'm very sorry if I vexed you this morning," with something approaching a sob.

"There, there, don't cry, little woman, I want to see you in this wonderful new gown, and I mean to go to the party myself."
J. M. B.





Doctor Temple's Sacrifice.

What One Woman's Love Did.

A DELICIOUS November afternoon even in London. There is no fog, and the sunlight is streaming in through the large bow window

at the end of Lady Mayfair's drawing-room.

There are a number of people talking with charming animation about topics which speak of an intellectual dearth and moral nothingness.

Someone says :

"Gardner's head over ears in love with that little woman."

It is untrue. Each time I catch his eye he looks more and more of a martyr. At last he makes some excuse to the pretty, dark-eyed widow, and comes towards me with his cup in one hand and a thin slice of bread and butter in the other.

"Bored, old man?" I ask, as he comes up. His shoulders are a little more bent than usual, and his head poked further forward.

I am hardly prepared for the tone of genuine disgust in which he answers me.

"Men, my dear fellow, are trespassing at these entertainments," he observes, pushing me a little, and taking my place at the window, which I resent.

"If so, they are on very good terms with the keepers."

Gardner laughs in a condescending way.

"With the man-traps, you mean."

His face assumes a serious expression, and he glances rather gloomily over the leafless square.

"What a disgraceful waste of time it is for a man," he remarks suddenly. "I would much rather do a good day's work in the fields than spend my time like this."

"It's the penalty of being rich," I answer. "You might do anything you like, and for that very reason everything seems tasteless."

"If only one's power of deriving pleasure increased in the same ratio as one's means of providing enjoyment, what a world this would be!" he says moodily, and then, with an entire change of voice, he adds, rather comically, "it's all right for girls, you know. They like having nothing to do—and do it admirably."

"How do you know?" is the rather unexpected retort I make.

Gardner turns round and stares at me curiously; but he follows the direction of my eye, and his smooth babyish face puckers up into a little laugh. I notice, however, a sudden wave of colour mounts to his cheeks, and this opens up a new train of thought which startles me.

The object of our attention is certainly the prettiest girl in the room. I have never come across anyone yet who ventured to question "Doctor" Temple's beauty, and yet for the last ten minutes she has been sitting by herself on a low chair,

biting her lips, and evidently in a very dangerous frame of mind.

Marion Temple is slight and girlish-looking. A gleam which speaks of a love of life and its pleasures, that even habitual restraint cannot quite subdue, burns in her eyes. There is an air of unconscious grace about all her movements, a stateliness in her bearing, and a scornful expression on her proud face, with its crown of wondrous chestnut hair, which speak of a haughty, untamed nature and a heart capable of any sacrifice for love or hatred.

"There is a woman who enjoys it no more than you," I observe. Gardner has quite recovered his self-composure.

"No wonder," he answers shortly. "Look at Jamieson."

I now see my friend for the first time. He is standing in the middle of a group of ladies, talking in a rather excited manner.

Everyone calls him a handsome boy. He has a fine figure and bearing, and sufficient conversation ready at a moment's notice to make people think him clever. His face is one which women instinctively admire, with its blue eyes, fair moustache, and curly light brown hair.

Only those who are intimate with him know that the calm reserve and stand-offish air, which attracts so many people, is the result of natural shyness and a retiring disposition.

"It is not his fault," I answer, rather hotly: "She turned him away."

"Why?"

"Because she made a point of his coming this afternoon, and he did it with very bad grace. I don't know what's come over Jamieson lately. He seems haggard and worn and out of spirits."

"I hope they won't break it off," says Gardner, taking up a vase of violets and playing with them.

"Break what off?" I inquired, rather absently.

"Their engagement."

"They are not engaged, my dear fellow. I thought everyone knew that."

For a moment it looks as if Gardner is going to faint. He turns white, and his hand trembles so that the water upsets from the vase.

"Why not?" he asks, with a queer little shake in his voice, which confirms my suspicions.

I am dumfounded. I hardly know what to say.

I begin to stammer.

"It is an understood thing, of course. They have been brother and sister to one another all their lives. Everyone takes it for granted that they will marry, but nothing definite is settled yet."

A little indrawn breath of pain escapes him. I begin to understand why Gardner has been abroad so long. How blind I have been.

"Go on," he says.

"There's nothing more. She mistakes his natural reserve for pride, and naturally will not be the first to make advances. Her manner terrifies him. Jamieson, of course, is as poor as a

church mouse, and this makes it more difficult for him. He seems to have no confidence in himself. One word from her would bring him to his knees at once. At least, so people think."

I glance at Gardner when I finish.

"I see. It is simply a question of time, then?"

I nod and turn away. The look on his face haunts me. Miss Temple, the celebrated lady doctor, is already preparing to go. Some of the ladies, talking to Jamieson, laughingly push him forward. He colours and stands his ground, trying to look unconscious.

As she reaches the door, Miss Temple turns round and gives him an unmistakable look. He shakes hands with his hostess at once and follows her out into the hall, frowning.

"There is something on the dear boy's mind," an old lady observes.

"Gardner has come back," says someone else. It is evident that other people have been more observant than your humble servant.

Miss Temple turns as she hears Jamieson's step behind her. "Will you drive home with me, Guy?" she asks, raising her eyes to him with a half pleading expression and an unexpected blush. His only answer is a little sullen nod, and he follows her down the steps rather ungraciously.

They drive for some time in silence. She is waiting for him to speak but his eyes are fixed on the window, and she leans back in the carriage, with almost imperceptibly heightened colour.

Presently he shivers and turns up the collar of his coat.

"You are cold," she exclaims anxiously, bending forward and laying her hand on his arm.

"No, thank you," he answers shortly; but he shivers again and his teeth chatter unmistakably.

She offers him some wraps in the carriage, but he only laughs unnaturally and shakes his head.

"What is the matter with you, Guy?"

"Nothing,"—shortly. "Only when you make such a fuss about a fellow coming you might find a word to say to him."

"I didn't want you to come if you were going to make such a favour of it."

"I am sorry I did then."

"So am I."

After this there is silence for some time. Both of them are rather ashamed. Marion, however, is the first to mend the breach.

"Guy!"

"Well!"

"What has been the matter with you during the last few weeks? You are so altered."

"Nothing, thank you."

"But there is," she persists. "You can't hide it from me. Why didn't you wish to come this afternoon?"

His eyes are still fixed on the window.

When he does speak it is in a voice so low that it is scarcely audible.

"Because my sister is dying, if you want to know," he says slowly. "She won't have a nurse or anyone, and we can't afford another servant. She cannot bear the thought of my leaving her room even for a second."

Marion is inexpressibly touched by the piteous cadence of his voice. She is filled with regret at her own selfishness.

"Why did you not tell me before? Oh, I am so sorry for you, Guy," she murmurs.

A softer light creeps into his eyes as she speaks, and he turns and touches her hand gratefully and smiles. Her face is wet with tears.

A change seems to have come over Marion. Perhaps she never realised before how poor her old friend was. Perhaps it never occurred to her what a deep gulf separated them—to a proud man like Guy, it might be for ever.

For a moment a terrible inward fight is raging. The proud spirit strikes at last upon a limit which it cannot overpass, and her heart seems to swell into an ineffable softness, and yielding; Marion turns suddenly to her companion, and exclaims:

"Guy, whenever you like I will come and stay."

It is impossible to describe what those words cost her; in that moment everything is sacrificed to what has become the absorbing passion of her life.

Jamieson is thunderstruck. He gasps for breath, and leans back heavily.

"What do you mean, Marion?"

She notices his agitation, and attributes the effect to its most natural cause. An overwhelming sense of perfect happiness steals over her. A beautiful dream has become a sweeter reality. It is almost too good to be true. She laughs softly and bends towards him with flushed cheeks and blazing eyes.

"Guy, there is no reason why your sister should die! I believe that I could cure her if you will let me try. But she



"Will you drive home with me, Guy?" she asks, raising her eyes to him.

will want years of careful watching and constant nursing. Why should we not be married at once and then——"

She breaks off abruptly, for Jamieson has raised both hands with a piteous gesture.

Still he cannot find words to utter; still her figure is swimming before his eyes; still that sinking sensation which seems tugging at his heart. Even in his wildest moments he has never dreamt of marriage with Marion Temple. Such a termination of their friendship had not occurred to him. It is the unattainable. Theirs is Affection not Love. Besides——

In an instant she notices that something is the matter with him. His whole body is quivering and his teeth are chattering again.

"Guy, are you so cold? Are you ill?" she asks.

"No, no!" he answers, in a low voice, regarding her with a curious look which fills her with fear. "It is not that—only—only—I have never thought of marriage."

It is impossible to mistake his faltering tone. She stares at him as if she could hardly believe her ears. For a moment it seems as if life and everything is near its ending. A terrible feeling of loneliness fills her heart, making her tremble with emotion and anguish.

The precious dreams which she has nursed in the bottom of her heart are betrayed, and they were undivined, unsuspected, and unasked for!

It is only by a most violent effort that she conquers her grief.

"I beg your pardon, Guy—I did not understand," she falters, feeling thoroughly unnerved, and so angry with herself that she can hardly speak.

Jamieson is, of course, powerfully moved by the signs of her agitation. Her love for him—her words of hope about his sister—the thought of what she might do towards saving the poor child's life—all have a susceptible influence on him. He feels ashamed of himself for not loving her; his own disposition enables him to appreciate the humiliation of it all; but he is at a loss to know what to say or how to act.

His sympathy is so enlisted that he suffers for her physically and mentally, but it is only natural that he should feel embarrassed by the secret which he has unconsciously forced from her lips. It upsets the complete understanding which he has deceived himself into believing to exist between them, and it has the effect of making their former relations impossible.

It is a passionate exclamation that escapes him the next minute.

"Marion, how can I ever thank you for your kindness? You don't know how grateful I am to you—but there are circumstances which make marriage out of the question. This will not interfere with our friendship. Promise me that, Marion."

He has seized both her hands, and raised his eyes to her with a supplicating look.

Before she has time to answer, however, the carriage draws up at the house in Grosvenor Place, and Jamieson releases her hands mechanically and opens the door. They both get out, Jamieson to walk home across St. James' Park.

As they part at the foot of the steps he says:

"I need hardly promise you, Marion, I will never breathe a word of this to any living soul."

"About that you may please yourself!" is the answer she makes. "I have not said anything to be ashamed of," and with this she turns and slowly mounts up the broad stone steps.

Dinner is nearly finished at 190, Grosvenor Place. Marion, in an evening dress of some expensive black material, looks her prettiest. The bright flush which her father noticed at tea-time has lasted through the evening. Otherwise she is perfectly composed, and shows no trace of any excitement.

Major Temple, six feet tall, as straight as an Indian, is in many ways a remarkable man. His one failing, if failing it may be called, is overwhelming pride. He is proud of himself, proud of his daughter, and proud of his family standing.

Dessert is on the table. The footmen have withdrawn, and the Major is pouring out his fourth glass of port.

He is evidently startled when Marion says:

"Father, why do you think that Guy Jamieson won't marry me?"

"Eh? What?" he exclaims. "I should very much hope he would never presume to think of such a thing. Won't, indeed! I have no doubt he would very much like to if he got the chance!"

Marion is cutting herself some grapes.

"No, he wouldn't," she says, calmly.

This takes the Major's breath away.

"What confounded impudence! Bah! My dear child, why do you talk such nonsense? Upon my word I thought you meant it for a minute."

"I do mean it, father."

"What the —— I beg your pardon, my dear. As I was about to say, what in the world makes you think that?"

"He told me so!"

"Told you!" thundered the Major, dropping his eye glasses and leaning forward over the table. "Told you! Do you mean to say you asked him to marry you?"

"No."

The Major leans back and gives a great sigh of relief.

"I told him that I would marry him and——" Marion's napkin has dropped, and she has to stoop to pick it up, which accounts for the sudden flush which mounts to her forehead, "he was very much obliged, but declined the honour."

It is impossible to describe the effect his daughter's words have on the Major. He turns livid, and tries to speak and cannot. He is paralysed.

In the whole of his life his pride has never had a shock like this. That a daughter of his should throw herself at the head of any man is humiliating enough. But a pauper! And to be refused!

The whole of the evening he will not speak another word. Marion says she does not see why a woman is not entitled to propose as much as a man. The Major grunts, and turns his back on her. He cannot sit down for five minutes together. He uses a terrible string of words, and mutters, "Heaven forgive me for swearing."

And begins again.

He is demoralised.

The next day "Dr." Temple calls at the shabby little rooms, where Jamieson and his sister have lived since their father failed. The Major has forbidden her ever to see him again, but she is thoroughly mystified, and determined to get to the bottom of the matter. Guy is unhappy—that is enough for her.

Jamieson is delighted to see her, but more embarrassed than ever. The longer he thinks the matter over, the stronger grows the conviction upon him that he has acted foolishly and unworthily. He cannot see his sister now without an unaccountable feeling of guilt. He is sacrificing, perhaps, her only chance of life, and Marion's love for—he is almost ashamed to acknowledge even to himself what little reason he has. And even that in a week's time may have vanished for ever!

Marion seats herself in the gloomy little drawing-room.

"I want to have a serious talk with you, Guy," she observes, calmly.

His feeling of discomfort increases under her calm stare. He shifts about uneasily, and begins playing with some ornaments on the mantelpiece.

"Well?" he says, and tries to pull himself together, and fails conspicuously. "What can I do for you?"

Marion is perfectly calm and collected, and after the manner of women, her confidence grows at the signs of his uneasiness. This externally. Internally her heart is throbbing unmercifully. Her love for the tall, well-built man leaning in front of her is so great that at times it almost threatens to overpower her. Jamieson, however, sees nothing of this.

"Well?" he repeats, wondering what in the world can have brought her to call after yesterday's scene.

"Guy, I am going to ask you rather a rude question. But I want to know! Why did you say that you could not marry me yesterday?"

"Really, Marion, you must forgive me if I refuse to be cross-questioned on the subject."

"You love someone else, of course?" she observes calmly. And for the life of him he cannot help dropping his eyes before her glance, which seems to read his very soul. She has been his only friend and adviser so long that he can hardly resent her manner.

"And if I do?" half defiantly.

"Then you might believe I am still sufficiently interested in you to wish to know her name."

Jamieson feels all his reserve melting before the sympathetic light which burns in her eyes, and a sudden longing steals over him to share the secret of his heart with someone else. So he bends forward, and says in a very quiet voice:

"Olive Latimer."

A little gasp escapes Marion, and for a moment she turns white as death, and leans back in her chair. The next instant she has taken his hand in her own, and is saying, warmly:

"Let me congratulate you, Guy; she is one of the sweetest girls I know."

His whole face lights up at her words. He begins thanking her in a torrent of eager sentences, and then he suddenly stops, and exclaims:

"But all this is rather premature. It is no use talking about it—"

"Yes, it is," she interrupts. "Tell me all about it—quickly," she adds, with sudden eagerness. "Are you engaged?"

"No—not yet," he falters, and turns red. "To tell you the truth, Marion, I have not seen her since she was staying with you last Christmas."

"Do you—do you think that she loves you, Guy?"

"Marion, how can I tell? Only I know that I cannot live without her!"

"Have you written to her?"

Jamieson confesses that he has not. He has written hundreds of letters and torn them up. He does not know how to begin or how to end.

"I suppose you know that she has gone to Paris as a governess to Lady Gordon's children?"

Jamieson nods.

"Yes, Lilian told me. They write to one another sometimes."

"And that they are going to India, perhaps for five or ten years at the end of this week?"

Another nod—this time because he cannot trust himself to speak.

Marion gets up suddenly and faces him.

"Do you mean, Guy, that you are going to let her set sail without a word?"

"What can I do?"

"Do! Go out and see her, of course!"

"I can't," he replied bitterly, dropping his hands.

"Can't?"

"It is impossible to leave my sister with no one in the house. I have to do everything for her. I must wait—that is all."

His voice suddenly quivered, and he drops his face in his hands.

Marion crosses her hands to her heart. For a moment she sways slightly, and the room seems to dance before her eyes. Then she draws herself up with a queer, determined little smile.

"I suppose," she says, "that you could trust Lilian to Dr. Temple while you went?"

Poor Jamieson! He cannot believe his ears. Her words give him a new hope. Her goodness almost overcomes him. Marion's face is flushed. She is singing a snatch of a gay little tune, and crying.

Five days have swept by. It is evening, and Marion is sitting over a large fire in the drawing-room. At 190, Grosvenor Place the Major is pacing up and down his library in a terrible temper. "Doctor" Temple

cannot help smiling at the thought of his anger.

Her face has altered even in the short time since we saw her last. She looks thin, pale and haggard. Her heart is broken.

Upstairs Lilian is sleeping peacefully for the first time for six months. "Doctor" Temple's care has done wonders for her. She is already on the way to recovery.

Suddenly a street door is opened, and shuts again noiselessly, and the next moment Jamieson bursts into the room. His face is shining from the cold, his eyes are sparkling; he has



He shifts about uneasily, and begins playing with some ornaments on the mantelpiece.

been going about for the last few days on wings, and he tries desperately hard not to laugh outright.

He comes straight to Marion's chair, and takes her hand in his. She has risen, and stands by his side on the hearth.

"How is Lillian?" he asks eagerly.

"I think she is better—yes, decidedly better already—Guy, tell me. How did you get on?"

He is so full of happiness that he can hardly speak. He lays both hands on her shoulders, and looks down into her eyes smiling.

"Oh, Marion! she has promised to marry me at once. She has loved me all this time, and if it had not been for you—you—" He stops abruptly, for "Doctor" Temple reels backwards, and falls fainting to the ground.

Two days later Gardner comes to my room at breakfast time. He has brought an atlas under his arm, and I notice the hard, set look on his face which has haunted me.

"Come to Africa next week?" he asks, helping himself to a brandy and soda, which is unconscionable at that hour of the day. "I can't stand life in London any longer."

I don't know what it is that tempts me to accept. Perhaps I cannot bear the thought of meeting Jamieson, just at present.

Half an hour later we have settled everything, and Gardner sends out my man for a cab.

He is at the door when I suddenly remember he may not have heard that Jamieson is engaged.

"By the way," I observe, "Jamieson is not going to marry 'Doctor' Temple after all."

In two strides he is by my side, and has grasped me by the shoulder.

"What do you mean?" he asks breathlessly.

"He is engaged to someone else."

"And Miss Temple?"

"Poor girl! I suppose she will devote herself body and soul to her profession! Have another brandy and soda."

"Jim!"

"How much? Say when."

"Jim!"

"Hullo, old man, what's the matter?"

"Nothing—but—I have just remembered I can't possibly go to Africa this year."

At that moment you might have knocked me down with a feather. But I knew what it meant. And I was right. Before six months were over "Doctor" Temple abandoned her title for ever, and assumed that of Mrs. Gardner.

"Did she love him?"

"Well, there are people who say that a woman can love twice."

Used to Shocks.

JUDKINS: "A train in the North of England was thrown down a fifty-foot embankment yesterday afternoon." Mrs. Judkins: "Gracious! How many were killed?" Mr. Judkins: "Not any. Luckily the train was occupied entirely by football men."

Hard Luck.

Not long ago an old pioneer, who had lived in Texas in the days of the early colonists, was boasting of the good old times. "Why, sir, I was once offered a league of land for a pair of old boots." "Didn't you take it?" said the party addressed. "No, sir, I didn't." "Poor land I reckon?" "Why, bless your heart, sir, it was the best land outdoors. Grass five feet high, a clear stream of water running through it, and an undeveloped silver mine in one corner." "And why in thunder didn't you make the trade," "Because," said the old man, in a regretful tone of voice—"Because I didn't have the boots!"

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Very few people realise how quickly money accumulates if it is put by regularly.

Supposing a good fairy dropped a five-shilling piece on your plate on the breakfast-table one morning, and the next morning dropped another, and the third morning another. At the end of a month she would have dropped thirty five-shilling pieces, which, of course, equals £7 10s. If she kept this up for another month, you would have £15, and if she still continued to do this every day of your life, you would in sixty years have received the stupendous sum of £5,400!

Now this is the prize which is to be offered shortly:

The sum of 5s. a day is going to be paid to someone—perhaps yourself.

This 5s. a day will mean:

TO YOUNG GIRLS:

Enough to buy yourself pretty frocks and heaps of chocolates, with a balance to give to mother to put by for you until you are married.

TO SINGLE GIRLS:

Provision against poverty, or, if in comfortable circumstances, additional pocket money.

TO ENGAGED GIRLS:

Enough to buy your trousseau, or to save up for some article you have always been in want of.

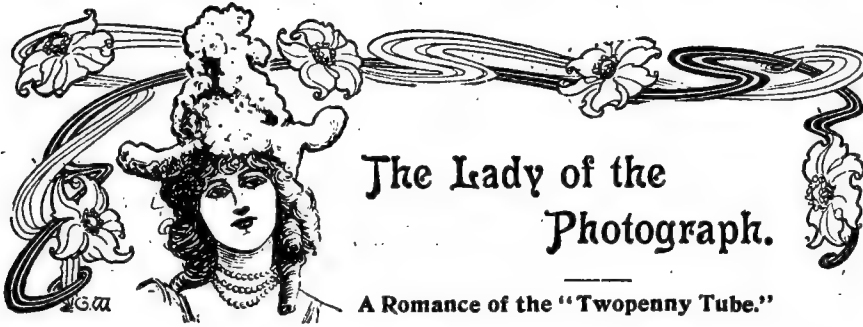
TO MARRIED WOMEN:

Enough to get yourself any clothes that are too expensive for your husband to buy, or to save up for the little ones.

And all this, not for a week, or a month, or a year, but for the whole of your life.

This means that if you are now fifteen years of age and live until you are seventy-five you will receive the colossal sum of £5,400, which is by far the most colossal prize ever won by anybody.

Full particulars of this scheme appear in the "Royal Magazine."



A Romance of the "Twopenny Tube."

CHAPMAN first saw her in a carriage on the "Tube." There was nothing at all unusual in the circumstance, yet to him it seemed freighted with romance.

He had been reading the morning paper assiduously ever since he got in, and had been only dreamily aware of the fact that fresh passengers entered at each station.

Glancing up carelessly as he finished one section of the paper, his eyes fixed themselves aimlessly upon the window at his left.

Suddenly his indifference vanished. A startled intentness held his gaze riveted to the window, for there he beheld the reflection of a wonderfully witching face. Such a face! There was a strange fascination, an irresistible charm about it that thrilled his imagination with an indefinable joy.

Then the truth broke upon him that this face corresponded glowingly to that of the radiant ideal which, ever since boyhood, his dreamy fancy had unconsciously cherished.

The revelation flashed upon him just as the reflected eyes turned and met his fully in the window.

How long Chapman might have sat gazing into their amber depths had not the owner quickly averted them may not be determined.

His next impulse, of course, was to turn and view the young woman herself. She sat diagonally across from him, two seats ahead. Without staring he saw that the window had told no lies. As a reality she was fully as captivating as her image had appeared.

He observed her trim blue tailor-made coat and skirt and her grey hat, but was prevented from taking further notes by the sound of the guard's voice calling his station. It was a rude awakening to the harshness of Fate.

All day the memory of the experience haunted him. He could not banish from his mind the recollection of that full glance deep into those long-lashed amber eyes.

It was three months later that Chapman, entering a post-office, saw a girl in blue standing at one of the desks preparing to send a telegram.

Her head was lowered and he could not as yet perceive her features, but a swift hope held him breathless, as, stationed near her, he took up a blank and simulated a deep interest in the message he was sending.

She raised her head—Chapman's pen ceased writing, and clattered to the floor. It was she of the amber eyes!

He picked up the pen and continued his blind scribbling. Just how his message was worded he never knew. His attention followed another channel. He noticed that the girl wrote and crumpled several blanks before she finally completed a telegram that suited her. He saw her finally deliver it to the clerk, pay for it, and return to the desk where her muff and small parcels lay. Then, before he could realise it, she had gathered up her belongings and was leaving the office.

With a pang of helpless regret he gazed after her. Then his eyes caught a glimpse of something left among the telegraph forms—something that the girl must have forgotten. It was a large yellow envelope. Chapman possessed himself of it without delay and hastened to the door. But the blue costume and grey hat were nowhere in sight.

Chapman returned to the desk and stood meditating. The envelope bore no address whatever. There was a card of some sort inside—possibly a photograph. His eager fingers tore away the covering. Hope leapt within him again, for gazing into his were the pictured eyes he had learnt to know so well.

Her likeness—hers! And in his very possession. The joy of it went to his head and prevented further calculations for the moment. Then the real significance of the situa-

tion dawned upon him. This was the coveted clue vouchsafed him by a benignant destiny. Given this chain he had that which led to the fulfilment of his heart's desire.

In one second's time Chapman had mentally surmounted the difficulty of discovering the girl's address; had presented the photograph; had made her acquaintance, and was fairly launched upon a most delightful courtship.

Then his common sense asserted itself. By what miraculous means were all these things to be accomplished?

He examined the photograph and perceived a single name on the back—a name scarcely discernible in the dark grey colouring of the cardboard: Marion. He repeated it under his breath.

Yes, but Marion who, Marion what? He chafed at the inadequacy of the information. Then a sudden idea gleamed upon his perplexed brain. There were the crumpled telegraph forms!

He lost no time in unfolding and reading them. The sight of several half-finished sentences, but no address of any kind, rewarded his presumption.

He sighed impatiently, put the photograph in his pocket, and departed. Various ideas suggested themselves as he absently threaded his way through the busy streets. He would interview the photographer. He would advertise in the lost and found columns of the newspapers. He would leave no stone unturned in his determination to pursue this matter to the end.

However, it is one thing to plan success and another to achieve it. His repeated efforts to follow up the clue proved utterly futile. Weeks and months went by and yet he had discovered nothing further concerning the fair girl whose photograph had accidentally fallen into his possession. Yet he did not despair.

The fact of having in his keeping the photograph of this radiantly charming girl—this girl whom he loved already with a dreamer's devotion—seemed a sign, a sure promise to him of ultimate triumph.

It was one year later that Chapman, running across a former chum of his who had recently married and was living in the suburbs, accepted an invitation to dine at his house on the following Sunday.

As he set out for his friend's residence, he wondered musingly what sort of a woman he had chosen for his life-mate. Frank Eldridge had been a fellow of exacting tastes. Chapman smiled a little as he recollected the numerous discussions they had often indulged in concerning womankind.

As he waited in the small drawing-room, his appreciative eyes took in the dainty beauty of the decorations. Then all suddenly his glance halted. A framed photograph stood upon the mantelpiece—a photograph that startled him into abrupt attention. He stood gazing upon it in stunned incredulity. There was no mistaking these features. The likeness was an exact duplicate of the picture in his possession!

Before he could recover from his shock, the voice of Eldridge sounded at the door. "Hello, Chapman, old man! Glad to see you."

Perhaps the host wondered at the abstracted response

that greeted him. An awful idea was bearing down upon Chapman's brain—an idea that benumbed him with its dread significance.

"Mrs. Eldridge will soon be down," pursued his friend cheerfully. Then, at the sound of soft footfalls, "Here she is now."

A young woman with amber eyes and soft brown hair had entered the room. Before Chapman's despairing gaze a lofty air castle of one year's building tumbled into ruins.

How he ever got through with that dismal dinner he could not have told. How he managed to maintain his equanimity and muster up an exaggerated amiability was incomprehensible to him when he afterwards reflected upon it.

Gradually, however, he grew rational enough to berate himself mentally for a consummate simpleton. Why had he ever dared to entertain such wild hopes, in the first place? Did anything in this life ever turn out as human beings hoped? Did dreams ever count for anything? Bah! He had been a fool.

He drifted into a cynical train of thought, the while he struggled to keep up an interest in his hostess' lively chat.

After all, even she was a disappointment, or else she had changed greatly in a year. Her face lacked the witchery he had seen in it at first. Really, her eyes were not quite the same. Could it be possible that his imagination had changed her to such an extent? He grew dully submissive to the inevitable.

The lights were turned on and music was suggested. Chapman nodded with a heavy acquiescence. What was it his hostess was saying?

"I am expecting my sister over this evening. Marion is quite musical and likes to entertain."

"Marion! The name darted like a meteor through the gloom of Chapman's reflections.

"Your sister?" he repeated, almost gaspingly.

"Yes, my twin sister. The resemblance is very striking. People are always—"

A ring of the door-bell interrupted her. Someone was being admitted. Chapman dared not even breathe. His head whirled. He raised his eyes as the portière parted.

There stood his lady of the photograph!

ANGELA MORGAN.

E E E E E E E E



Robert Lane's Trial Trip.

A New Way of Telling the
Old, Old Story.



ELIZABETH STONE had been afflicted all her life with a deep ambition to be somebody. She was undoubtedly clever. Everyone said so; but her talent was evenly distributed in half a dozen ways. In short, she was qualified to make some man intensely happy, yet nothing was farther from her intentions.

She analysed herself thoroughly, and at last concluded that the world of literature needed her; and that Fame stood beckoning with outstretched hands.

Now, Elizabeth never did anything by halves, and, accordingly, the little west chamber underwent a singular change. An old oak desk, that had been her father's, found itself once more in favour; a couch and a few cushions, a reading lamp, and a shelf of reference books gave the place quite the air of a study. A few good posters, and a head of William Morris, together with a brown stone jug of ink and a ream of paper completed the equipment.

She contemplated the purchase of a typewriter. Of course she couldn't use one, but its atmosphere was good. On second thoughts, however, she concluded to wait and buy it with the proceeds of her first story.

Weeks of hard work followed. Her correspondence increased twofold. Letters came from all points of the compass, but their contents were always the same. She could read them with her eyes shut.

"The editors of ——— are glad to have had the opportunity of examining the inclosed manuscript, and regret that they do not find it suitable for publication."

Still, Fame stretched forth her shadowy hands, and Elizabeth toiled on.

Early in the spring a new factor in her work appeared. This was Robert Lane. He belonged to that class of men that women abominate. He was too big and good-looking to

awake their slightest sympathy; too ambitionless and happy-go-lucky to command their admiration, and, above all, he was a firm believer in that old, exploded theory, that a woman is more heart than brain, and that she really needs his love.

Still, he had redeeming traits, and Elizabeth, who was beginning to look at all men as "material," concluded that he might be worth cultivating. She would make a thorough study of him, at any rate, for her art's sake.

The next story was sold. The next and the next went to market and brought back their returns.

"Betty," said her brother one day, "what do you know of love? Not an atom, and yet that little sketch would make one think you'd felt it all!"

The weeks melted away. Elizabeth had never been so happy before. Of course, it was simply the realisation of her own strength, and the knowledge that the world held out a welcome.

As for Robert, he was a splendid subject! They walked and drove together in all her leisure hours; they took long trips out into the country, and sat till twilight in the tall, deep grass, and did a thousand foolish things.

Elizabeth wore her most becoming gowns, because—well, just because! She baked all sorts of toothsome things, she never knew just why; and the stories got better and better as the days went by.

The year was beginning to grow old. The asters and the wild clematis had held their autumn *fête*, and the leaves had danced until they lay, tired out, in russet heaps.

Robert had proposed spending an afternoon in the woods, and they had started with the coffee-pot for chaperone, for it was their last picnic of the year.

They followed the brook up towards its head, and laid the cloth among the ferns like happy children.

"Betty," he said at last, "what makes you good to me?"

The girl sat, looking past him, up to where the tops of the trees were turning pink against the sky. The man bent towards her. She laughed, but there was a tremble in it, and still she looked away.

"I haven't been good," she said, shaking her head slowly, "only to—myself!"

A great gladness came to Robert's eyes. "Oh, Betty," he said, "I——"

"Yes, only to myself," she went on hurriedly. "You see,

"I needed you in my work, you know. 'I—I—oh, don't you understand, I wanted you to study from; that's all!'"

Lane drew in his breath sharply, as if something had hurt him, and looked at the girl in a dull, stupid way.

The light on the tree-tops was changing now. The pink was turning into violet. Perhaps it was the reflection that made Elizabeth so white.

Robert rose at last, slowly, as a sick man does, and she watched him as he went down the path for the trap. Mechanically she gathered up the fragments of their little feast, and put them away; then sat waiting with her hands clasped tightly.

It was some time before he came. The trees had grown cold and grey, with deep purple shadows upon their faces, and Robert's face was like them.

He helped her into the trap without a word, and they drove silently homeward. The road seemed long and lonely, and Elizabeth was cold.

A choir of crickets had commenced their twilight serenade. Lights began to glimmer from the little houses along the road, and children's voices reached them now and then, like memory, through the years.

"By Jove!" said Robert Lane, when they were nearly in the town. "I almost forgot! I'm going away next week."

Elizabeth felt the blood going to her brain; her ears rang. "You see," he went on, "my holiday has been a long one, and I must be getting back to work. Old ties and old friends are calling me, and, after all, 'there's no place like home,' is there?" He glanced at Elizabeth. She was sitting erect. Her lips were compressed, and her eyes had grown strangely dark. There was a suspicion of a twinkle in Robert's own eyes as he continued:

"We've been good comrades, you and I, and I'll never forget the jolly times we've had together. You've quite won me over to your theories, too. This talk of woman's realm is all old-fogeyism! Bread and biscuits, and babies, may have interested our great grandmothers, but to women of to-day, with their advanced 'mental concepts,' it's all twaddle! You've got the right stuff in you—no sentimental nonsense. Just believe in yourself, and go ahead, and you'll come up with the best of us!"

Elizabeth did not sleep that night. She sat up, staring out of the window at the stars. The coffee had been a little strong, she told herself. That dull, miserable pain about her heart was indigestion. A letter came from Robert a week later. He had been so busy at the last, and there had not been time to call on even the oldest friends.

He wished her success in her work, and hoped that some day in future years their paths would cross again. He had a secret to tell her too. On the night, of the fifteenth he would be with the one woman he could love. He would ask her to be his wife. Would she, Elizabeth, remember him, and pray for him, and wish him well?

Elizabeth Stone sat in her study with the letter in her hands. She read it once, twice. Of course, she did not care! Why should she? Their friend-

ship had been purely platonic; she had found in him what she wanted—a model. He would be one tiny stone in the great wall of fame with which she would surround her life. She was happy, she told herself, but she laughed as a woman does when her heart is breaking.

On the fifteenth! It was just a week now. All through the days that followed she worked with fierce determination, and perhaps it was because she was so weary that she lay at night with her heart pressed hard against the pillow. Once she awoke with a cry, her arms outstretched in the darkness. It was only a pitiful longing for fame, of course.

The evening of the fifteenth dragged itself round, and Elizabeth went into her study and closed the door. She commenced a dozen things—threw them each in turn aside, and sat staring unseeing into space. The clock ticked noisily, and the atmosphere of the room seemed to stifle her. She opened the window. Cool night air flooded in, heavy with the breath of roses. The arbour, where John used to smoke, was white with roses still.

Moved by an irresistible impulse, she slipped out, and, closing the door behind her, hurried down the path.

The arbour looked forlorn and lonely. A band of checkered moonlight fell through the lattice to the vacant seat, and Elizabeth saw it through a mist of sudden tears. She ran past—on down the drive into the kitchen garden. The gooseberry bushes caught at her frock, and a twig from a plum tree fastened itself unheeding in her hair.

A cab stopped at the corner. It had come in haste from the station. As the occupant sprang out, a passer-by grasped him by the shoulders and turned him suddenly round.

"Bob Lane, as I'm a sinner!" said the captor. "Why, we thought you had gone home again."

"So I did, for four days," replied the traveller, laughing; "a flying visit, I'll admit; but, as you see, I have an appointment with your sister—Elizabeth."

"Betty?" asked her brother. "Why, she never told us. She's gone off somewhere, too. Mother's been looking for her. She's not in the study nor—"

A singular light had been creeping into Robert's eyes.

"I'll find her," he said quietly, and was gone.

He tiptoed across the lawn to the arbour. "Elizabeth," he called softly, "Elizabeth." There was no reply. A breeze rustled faintly in the leaves and set the shadows to dancing. "Betty," he called again.

Out in the kitchen garden, Elizabeth was pacing restlessly. "Just once," she pleaded with herself, "just for one little minute, to sit where he used to be!" She paused irresolutely—half turned about—paused again, then fled up the drive.

She did not see the figure in the shadow. She did not see his outstretched arms until they were folded close about her, and then—

An hour later the moon peered into the arbour to see why they had grown so still, but the reason was such an old one that she wasn't interested.

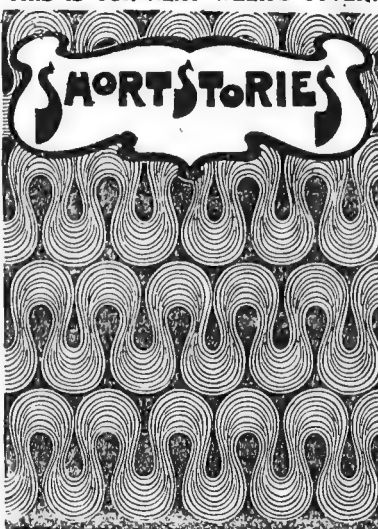
HELEN E. WRIGHT.

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No Wonder.

Nothing else in the world will bring the same ghastly expression to a man's face that flits over his countenance when, in the midst of a gay party, he suddenly remembers that he has left his handkerchief at home.

THIS IS OUR NEXT WEEK'S COVER.



This is the third of the famous Optical Illusion covers. Turn the paper rapidly in a circle and a surprising effect results.

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But They Haven't.

It is estimated that there are two thousand four hundred disorders to which the human frame is liable. When a man is laid up with the rheumatism he is apt to think that the entire number has struck him in concert.



That Painful Smile.

FOR heroic and vain endeavours to look pleased, nothing can equal the expressions of

two girls compelled to dance with each other on account of scarcity of men.

The Advance of Civilisation.

It is rumoured that an indiarubber omnibus is to be the next thing, and its advantages will be that when quite full it will hold a couple more.

Answered.

HE (a new arrival at seaside hotel, to unknown lady): "Aw—have you been a captive in this—er—menagerie?" She: "You can hardly call me a captive; perhaps 'keeper' would be better, for I am the wife of the showman, and have to help feed the animals."

They Don't Speak Now.

MISS SWANSDOWN (at the ball): "What did you do with my shawl, Mr. Peterkin? I gave it to you to keep half an hour ago." Peterkin (producing a slip of paper): "Good gracious, what have I done! In a fit of absent-mindedness I took it out and pawned it."

Quite Another Thing.

"I AM not wealthy," he said; "but if the devotion of a true and tender heart goes for anything with you, Miss Clara—" "It goes well enough with me, Mr. Spoonbill," interrupted the fair girl, with a pensive look on her face; "but how will it go with the grocer?"

He Knew his Friend.

MUDGE: "I was looking over my top-coat to-day, and I find that the moth has nearly ruined it." Yabsley: "Why don't you sue them for damages?" Mudge: "Sue the moths for damages? You talk like a child." Yabsley: "I didn't mean the moths; I meant the pawn-brokers."

Through French Eyes.

SCOTSMAN: "What'll y' hae?" Frenchman: "I will take a drop of contradiction." Scotsman: "What's that?" Frenchman: "Vell, you put in de whisky to make it strong, de water to make it weak, de lemon to make it sour, and de sugar to make it sweet. Den you say to your friend, 'Here's to you!' and you take it yourself."

She Cracked a Commandment.

A LITTLE girl who was walking with her mother was tempted by the sight of a basket of oranges, exposed for sale, and quietly took one; but afterwards, stricken by conscience, returned it. On her return home she was discovered in tears, and on being asked the cause of her sorrow replied, sobbing: "Mamma, I haven't broken any of the commandments, but I think I've cracked one a little."

Hard on the Neighbours.

"WHY, you'd better knock the door down. What do you want?" "Don't let me wake any of your family. I'm just using your knocker to wake the people next door. I've come home rather late and got locked out, d'ye see, and

they have no knocker."

Reason Enough.

TUBBS (recounting his experience at a musical party a few evenings previous): "They did not even ask me to sing." Miss Whitely (placidly): "You've sung there before, haven't you?" "Yes, once. Why?" "Oh, nothing!"

Too Much to Expect.

"TOMMY," said his mother, "do you think you'll get a prize at the school for being good?" "No, ma," said Tommy. "Why not, sir?" asked his father sternly, laying down the paper. "Because they don't give any," answered Tommy meekly.

Their First Quarrel.

"I AM going down to the river to drown myself," said she tearfully. "All right, my dear; start at once if you want to," said he coolly. "It is raining, and it would spoil my new dress; but I am going just as soon as it stops, you see if I don't!"

He'd Seen Them Before.

"BETTER not wait for Charley any longer. You know what it is when a fellow is calling on his girl." "Ah, there they are now! He is just bidding her good-night." "All right; let us go and have a game of billiards. We'll just have time."

Spring Chicken Again.

"WAITER," said a young civil engineer, after rainily struggling with knife and fork for fully ten minutes on an alleged spring chicken, "bring me a chisel, a steel wedge, and a heavy hammer, for I'm interested now, and am determined to see of what material this thing is made."

Maintaining His Reputation.

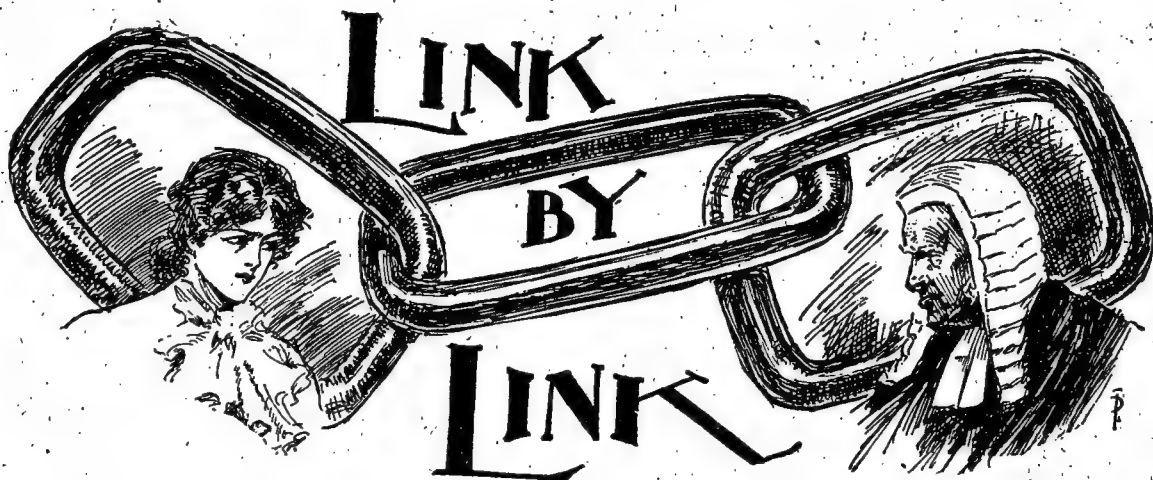
MARY: "George, I have heard you spoken of frequently as a successful business man." "I am that. Why?" "Well, considering the fact that you have been visiting me for three years, I think you should maintain your reputation and talk business." He maintained his reputation.

He Liked Steam.

"STEAM is a great thing," remarked a French traveller in a railway carriage to his *vis-à-vis*. "So it is," was the reply; "I owe my fortune to it." "Monsieur is manager of a company?" "No." "Engineer, perhaps?" "No; I have lost a number of relatives by railway accidents."

To Insure Domestic Bliss.

"So you are going to marry that small, wheezy, consumptive-looking specimen of a man, are you?" said one girl to another. "I really don't see what you can see in him to love." "Mary," said her friend, "Mary, your father is a small man, isn't he?" "Yes," was the reply; "but what of that?" "Nothing, except that if he wasn't small it would be doubtful if your mother would be the master. I'm going to marry that small man because I'm fond of having my own way, and won't accept any risks."



Principal Characters in the Story.

Gerald Mortimer: Of Moulstone Manor, in love with Nina Penhurst.

Mrs. Mortimer: Gerald's mother.

Dr. Branksome: Medical attendant at Moulstone asylum, a great friend of Gerald.

Anthony (or Felix) Cordelvin: An inmate of Moulstone asylum, who was found murdered.

Nina Penhurst: Governess at Moulstone Manor, a distant relative of Cordelvin.

Roderick Vanstone: Nina's guardian. He lives at Streatham, and has under his charge a man named Cordelvin, of weak intellect, whose estate, held in trust for Nina, he manages.

Stephen Vanstone: Roderick Vanstone's son.

The woman in the dark blue cloak: She was seen at Moulstone on the night of the murder, and has acted rather suspiciously since.

Stebbing and Burge: Men employed by Vanstone.

Inspector Trench: Of Scotland Yard, who is intrusted with the task of discovering the murderer of Cordelvin.

CHAPTER XXI.

A New Prison House.

How long Gerald Mortimer remained unconscious after that heavy blow on the head, he did not know. When he recovered, it was to find himself in complete darkness. He was lying on his side; his bonds had been re-bound; a rough straw heap formed his couch. That was all he could realise in his first waking moments.

Presently, however, to his sensitive nostrils arose a musty, humid odour such as can only proceed from damp earth. An explanation suggested itself to Gerald's mind, and he rose quickly, and sidled along the wall so that his knuckles should touch it. They encountered a rough, clammy plaster surface, and he felt his suspicions confirmed. He was in an underground cellar, removed there, doubtless, for his greater security.

It was indeed a dismal prison-house. The earthy vapour rising from the damp of the floor and walls crept through his clothes and struck with chill touch right into his bones. Owing to his recent period of oblivion and the utter darkness which prevailed in the place, it was impossible for him to think with certainty as to what hour it was. But, conjecturing that he could not have remained unconscious very long, and failing, after listening intently for some time, to detect any sound of voice or movement overhead, he was led to believe, correctly as it happened, that it was very early morning.

In the circumstances, it was useless to shout or otherwise draw attention to himself. Moreover, he was still feeling sufficiently weak and dazed to allow any desire for further violence or activity at the time. So he was forced to the inevitable course of waiting till daylight. For hours, then,

he paced the narrow confines of the cellar, or cell, as it seemed to him, striving by movement to shake off the tendency to shiver which the dampness had induced. He walked till his limbs ached, and then, in very exhaustion, threw himself down on the straw-heap in the corner, and to his after-astonishment, managed to sleep.

The rattling of a chain and the sliding of a bolt, obstinate through rust, awoke him. The moment after, Ned Stebbings and Burge appeared, bearing a lantern and food. The altered conditions of his imprisonment were emphasised by the nature of the latter. Yesterday his breakfast had consisted of coffee and a quantity of substantial eatables. To-day, a brief glance showed it was bread and water!

"Why am I put down here?" Gerald demanded, with as much indignation as, in his weakness, he could muster.

There was no answer. Stebbings and Burge had been well drilled now as to their part, and maintained an obstinate silence.

"Where is Mr. Vanstone? I want to see him."

But Stebbings kept his teeth closed and his tongue still, taking his place near by with the inevitable revolver ominously held in his right hand. Burge, equally reticent, untied Gerald's hands in silence. Gerald, having spoken two or three times and found it impossible to get any answer, consumed as much of his poor meal as he could, and then once more submitted himself to be bound.

And now, thank Heaven! he was not to be left in darkness. For the two silent gaolers as they retired, left the lighted lantern standing in a corner. It was a small mercy for which Gerald felt grateful.

By the light of the lantern the prisoner could now see the kind of apartment in which he was confined. It was a cellar as he had already conjectured, unusually large and fairly lofty. At one side of it was a small grating about a foot square, but in addition to the bars, Gerald could gather from the feeble rays of daylight which struggled in through a chink, that the aperture had been boarded up from the outside.

"They mean to make sure of me this time," was Gerald's doleful comment, as he realised the absolute hopelessness of any escape. "Oh, if Cordelvin had but been a little quicker in releasing me! I should have been free, free to go where I liked, free to go to Nina!"

From the first conscious moment of his incarceration, the girl for whom he had so recently declared his passionate love, had rarely been absent from his mind. He had thought of her tenderly and longingly, had prayed that the ordeal of anxiety which she was undergoing, and which must have been a cruel to by his inexplicable disappearance, might be lightened by the mercy of Heaven. Buoyed up previously with the hope of speedy release or escape, the separation had not sapped the hope that ever sprang in his breast.

But now, as he gazed around his dismal cell, and realised the helplessness of his case, his heart sank, and with the articulate murmur of Nina's name, the floodgates of his heart opened. A lump, dry and choking, rose in his throat, his brain throbbed and his breast ached. He strove to control his feelings of bitter grief, struggled to combat what threatened to happen, but to no purpose. He, Gerald Mortimer, healthy and strong, and in the prime of manhood, felt his chin fall upon his breast, and he burst into a torrent of scalding tears.

This outward demonstration of grief, as is always the case with a man, was fierce but short-lived. He ceased to cry and his hands being tied, blinked his eyes to dryness.

The morning wore on and midday arrived. Once more Stebbings and Burge appeared, and once more Gerald set himself to discuss the meal set before him, which was of the same beggarly description as the breakfast.

Once more he tried to tempt the men into speaking, but they were obdurate, receiving his questions in sullen silence. At the completion of the meal, however, they changed their ordinary programme. Instead of retiring, Burge stepped out of the cellar and presently returned with a basket of tools, rejoining Stebbings.

A brief conversation between the two men then ensued, after which Burge approached the wall, and presently began drilling two or three holes in a beam which skirted it. Gerald watched the operation idly, as yet unable to divine the meaning of it. From out of the basket Stebbings handed Burge a couple of large strong rings with screws attached, and these Burge firmly affixed to the beam.

The rattle of a chain was next heard, and for the first time it occurred to Gerald that all these careful preparations were for him. Nor was he mistaken. A double chain, having been affixed to the rings in the beam, was attached at the other end to a pair of handcuffs. Then, quietly and expeditiously as an executioner pinioning his victim, Burge once more removed the cords from Gerald's wrists, and snapped the steel handcuffs upon the latter.

Resistance would have been useless, for throughout the operation Ned Stebbings stood ready with the revolver, ever on the alert to use it at the first suggestion of bother.

Thus they left the prisoner, handcuffed and chained to the wall, the outcome of Roderick Vanstone's instructions.

"He nearly got free last night," the elder Vanstone had remarked that morning, "and we must take no more risks."

Gerald stood for some minutes gazing at the lantern which had been again left and renewed with another candle. He was trying to persuade himself that he was dreaming. Then as he realised his experiences were indeed only too real, he burst out into a rueful laugh. The absurdity of a man being imprisoned and chained in a private house, within a mile or two of the heart of London, was too much for his sense of the ludicrous, and, serious as his position was, he could not for the life of him stifle that laugh.

"Why, I might be living in the Middle Ages from my appearance just now," he muttered to himself. "And yet this is the twentieth century. Well, I'm secure enough now. Though Cordelvin should find me here, which is very unlikely, these handcuffs and chains would be a bit beyond him."

The recognition of his greatest trouble, viz., imprisonment, as inevitable, presently caused that trouble to fall a little in the background of his thoughts, and the mitigation wrought by the change, of some of the lesser attendant evils, occurred to him.

"At all events, these steel handcuffs don't cut like the cords, and there's the comfort of having my hands in front of me. Perhaps, too, I shall be allowed to eat my meals alone now, without having those two ruffians looking on the whole time."

In which conjecture he was right, for, when Stebbings brought him in his third meal for the day, he departed at once. Gerald had quite free play for his hands now, so far as eating and drinking were concerned, therefore, the necessity for his temporary release while Stebbings kept guard with the revolver no longer existed.

Stebbings returned about half-an-hour afterwards to clear

away the things, and, left to himself, Gerald once more fell into a state of despairing contemplation. How long was this condition of things to go on? What was the intention of the ruffianly Roderick Vanstone? Was he going to keep him there for good, to half-starve and torture him? If such were his resolve, better far if he would kill him outright. But no, Gerald did not want to die. Young as he was, with all the affections of his heart bound up with those of Nina Penhurst, he wanted to live on, for while there was life there was hope. Some wise man had said that, and it was true—it must be true. And yet, what hope could there be for him? Who among all his anxious friends—Nina, his mother, or his other friends—who among them all would know where to look for him? Doubtless by now they were looking for him, scouring the country, inquiring at railway stations, at the ports, wiring his description to places abroad, doing everything in fact that fond hearts could think of. But who among them all would dream that he was shut up in an old house on Streatham Hill? It was such a preposterous position that no one would ever—

Hush! What was that?

The sound of voices in altercation had broken upon his ear. That mere unqualified fact might perhaps have startled him; but as he listened it became apparent to him that among the voices—three or four—one of them betrayed the deep contralto of a woman!

What was more, the voices seemed to proceed from the level of the cellar, coming from the other side of the door by which Stebbings and Burge had entered and departed.

Again the feminine voice came, and now, holding his breath, Gerald was able to catch a word here and there.

"Let me go. . . . thieves. . . . I am not mad. . . . you would kill me. . . . murderers, that's what you are. . . ." The rush of words ended with a wild shriek, there was the sound of a scuffle, the echo of a heavy thud, and of a fall. Then all was quiet, save low murmurings and the soft closing of a door.

Whatever had happened, Gerald could not possibly know. With the outer silence, he breathed again and struggled with grimly-set jaw with his chains, fuming as he realised the uselessness of it all.

Something was wrong, something very wrong. But as to what it was, there was no chance of discovering. He called. There was no answer. Called again, louder this time, but with a like result. No sound broke upon his ears save the dull echo of his own cry. He was powerless. He could only wait, wait, wait.

CHAPTER XXII.

Inspector Trench Visits Streatham Hill.

CONSTABLE JENNINGS, the plain-clothes man, whom Inspector Trench had deputed to follow the woman in the blue cloak, was an admirable type of his order. Not endowed with any extraordinary amount of acumen, imagination, or resource, he was possessed of that doggedness, that persistent "sticking to his post," which counts for so much in his profession.

It was little wonder then that this Casabianca of the force never once gave the woman in blue a chance of eluding him. Whenever her cab slowed down, his followed suit, and whenever hers quickened, his did similarly with clockwork regularity. So they duly reached Streatham Hill, the two cabs stopping some little distance from the old house.

And here perforce the plain-clothes man had to lose sight of his quarry, for she, halting by a side gate in the falling dusk, unlocked it with a key taken from her pocket and passed through, locking it again on the other side.

Jennings could not follow; but this he did not mind.

Fortified with the reflection that so long as she was inside she was safe, and guaranteeing to himself that she couldn't come out without his seeing her, he moved along the road to a corner which commanded a full view of both the gates, cheerfully filled his pipe, leant against the wall, and began to watch and wait.

It didn't matter very much to Jennings if he had to wait one hour or ten. He was used to waiting, and on such jaunts as this invariably provided himself with a day's rations and

tobacco. So with his pipe between his teeth, he stood there humming, "She wore a wreath of roses"—his favourite air—with the greatest equanimity. Occasionally while he waited he took a stroll across the road, but always with a sidelong glance which enabled him to keep both gates in view all the time. Once a policeman, on whose beat he happened to be standing, wondered why he loitered there, but a peculiar wink and nod from Jennings, in which a whole police dictionary seemed to be expressed, satisfied him and sent him on his way.

He had waited over an hour, and at length his vigil was ended. From out of the gate by which the woman had entered there now issued the familiar blue cloak, and in a twinkling the plain-clothes man was following in its wake at a discreet distance. The wearer of the cloak was carrying a hand-bag now, and walked along some distance before hailing the cab.

Ten seconds later Jennings had entered a similar vehicle and was off in pursuit.

Jennings was not an easy man to surprise, and therefore when the first cab, instead of making towards Clapham, pursued its way along the Kennington Road towards Westminster, it didn't worry Jennings. Not even when he saw the cab pull up outside a small private hotel in the Westminster Bridge Road and the figure in the blue cloak alight, settle with the cabman, and enter the house, did he betray any astonishment. He just vaguely speculated why she hadn't gone home instead, and then, taking up his position at a convenient spot, started his waiting and watching game all over again.

It had lasted two hours. This time and at present there seemed to be no sign of its ending. Jennings wasn't getting impatient, but in his own stolid way he began to think that he ought to get further instructions. Inspector Trench had probably returned to Scotland Yard by now. He would send a message telling him where he was.

He hastily scribbled a note on a page of his pocket-book, tore it out, and then beckoned a policeman who passed presently. Half a minute was sufficient to explain to the uniformed official what was required of him. He jumped into a cab and in five minutes was at Scotland Yard.

Inspector Trench had not returned, but he had telephoned through telling them where he was to be found in Clapham if wanted, and in a brief space of time the note was transported thither and handed to the detective.

"Ho, ho!" murmured that officer on receiving the missive, "no wonder, Dr. Branksome, we've been kept here waiting all this time. I couldn't quite make it out."

"Why, what's up?" inquired the doctor. "What's happened?"

"Why, the woman's gone to a private hotel in the West—"

(Continued on page 640.)

Immersed in Liquid Poison.

A HORRIBLE ADVENTURE.

A horrible adventure has recently been recounted by Alexander Robert Heffernan, of 53 Archel Road, Fulham, now an ex-constable of the Metropolitan Police Force. It appears that on the afternoon of February 26th, 1897, he was on duty near the Regent's Canal, at a point where the water is rendered highly poisonous by the drainings from chemical and gas works. He was told that a man had jumped in, to commit suicide. Being a noted swimmer, Heffernan dived into the poisonous water without hesitation. For fully twenty minutes the two men struggled in the water, with the poisonous chemicals bubbling and fizzing around them. Both swallowed a quantity of the poisonous liquid, and although prevented from drowning, the would-be suicide died a few weeks after. The effect of the water upon the plucky constable was terrible to contemplate. The poison, according to the police surgeon, completely destroyed the coating of his stomach. "I was quite

unable to digest my food," he says, "and every time I took any, was sick until it was vomited back. I was placed on the police sick list and sent down to the Convalescent Home at Brighton twice. After the second visit I had to go back to my own home very bad indeed. I was so weak that when I attempted to walk I went blind, and had to cling to anything near me to prevent me from falling. I had fearful night-sweats, and would often be seized with a kind of cramp, which seemed to be in my very bones. I could not retain food or nourishment, except in minute quantities—just enough to keep me alive.

"I next went into Brompton Hospital, but again I derived no benefit. For two years I remained in the police force, suffering in this way and during the two years I was only able to put in three months duty! Seeing that I was practically done for, in January, 1899, I was given a special pension, and retired from the force.

"I continued to get worse, despite all efforts. No matter how tempting and light the food which was prepared, I vomited all I took, and the very sight of food made me sick! I became reduced in weight from over 13 stone to just over 10 stone, and I was as weak as a kitten. The vomiting, the pain across the stomach and in the back, the night sweats and the cramping sensations continued unabated until September in last year.

"In that month I was recommended to try some Bile Beans. A few doses made me feel a bit stronger, so I went in for a course, in order to give them a fair trial. By the time I had taken a few boxes I was a different man. The vomiting had stopped, and the dull aching pain at the pit of the stomach had gone. Every day I got stronger and stronger. The cramp and the night sweats stopped; the specks and flashes before my eyes disappeared; I became able to walk without needing support, and at night I enjoyed sound, refreshing sleep.

"To cut a long story short, I am now quite cured. The effects of the poison have been driven out of my system by the Beans, and my stomach and digestive organs seem to have been re-made. I have eaten so well that I have gained twenty-one pounds in weight, and am still adding to it. For the first time for nearly five years, on Christmas Day last, I was able to eat and enjoy a good Christmas dinner.

"A few months ago I was able to re-start work as attendant in a picture gallery. For three weeks before Christmas I was at work there from half-past eight o'clock in the morning to half-past eleven o'clock at night, Saturdays included, and I did not feel fatigued with it.

"In my case Bile Beans seem to have worked a miracle! Publish my statement by all means, and let as many people as possible know what a splendid remedy is placed within their reach."

The chief lesson to be learned from the above sensational incident, is that no case of digestive ailment, weakness, nausea after meals, sleeplessness and general debility is too bad for Bile Beans to touch. Remember this! Hand this case to your friends who are ailing. To put Bile Beans in the way of a sufferer is the kindest service you can render. Just think of the debt of gratitude Heffernan owes to the friend who recommended Bile Beans to him. You may earn like gratitude from some of your friends. The medicine referred to above may be obtained from all chemists, price one and three-half-pence a box or two and nine for a box containing three times the quantity.

minster Bridge Road, and my man's watching the place. Come on, we must be off. I must take her to-night."

Twenty minutes after that the inspector was talking to the plain-clothes man.

"Still there?" he inquired, laconically.

"Yes, sir," returned Jennings, "I followed her from Streatham Hill here. She went in there three hours ago and I haven't took my eyes off the door and there's no back way."

"Good, then I can nab her. You'd better come with me. Jennings."

He crossed over as he spoke and entered the door of the private hotel. The portly proprietress met him in the hall.

"You want rooms, sir," she inquired civilly.

"No, madam," the officer responded. "You have a lady in this house who came three hours ago. A lady dressed in a blue cloak."

The proprietress looked up sharply.

"Oh, you may tell me, madam," the officer continued, "I am a police-officer."

The woman looked a little nervous.

"Well, sir," she said hesitatingly, "a lady dressed in a blue cloak did come here."

"And she's here still?"

"Yes, sir. She took a bedroom for the night, and not feeling very well, went to bed at once."

"Very good," said the inspector, "then will you have the goodness to awake her. I hold a warrant for her arrest."

The woman looked still more scared than ever, and seemed altogether too frightened to carry out the officer's orders. But he was firm, albeit polite, and she had reluctantly to go upstairs, the inspector and the plain-clothes man following her to the landing.

The hotel proprietress knocked at "No. 7," but no answer came. She knocked again; still no answer. Another knock, sufficiently loud to arouse the whole house. No answer.

"Try the door," suggested the inspector.

The woman turned the handle; the door yielded. The woman looked in.

"Why, goodness gracious!" she gasped, "she's not here!"

The inspector darted to her side in a moment.

"Are you quite sure this is the right room?" he demanded, gazing around the unoccupied chamber, with its unruffled bed.

"Quite sure!" she responded, "I showed her up here myself."

"Humph! And you, Jennings, you've watched the street door all the time?"

"Haven't took my eyes off it, sir!"

"And you're quite sure she didn't go out?"

"Positive, sir; there ain't been a soul come out of this house 'cept a man with a dark beard."

The inspector swung round impetuously. The landlady looked up curiously.

"Have you a man with a black beard staying here?" asked the inspector.

"No, sir," the woman answered at once, "we are nearly empty, and there's nobody at all answering that description."

The inspector was visibly annoyed. "Jennings," he said sharply, "how long was it after this woman came in that this man went out?"

Jennings averted his eyes for reflection. "About half an hour, I should say, sir," he said.

The inspector bit his lip. "Jennings," he said angrily, "you're an absolute fool!"

Jennings flushed up.

"Don't you see that the woman who entered and the man who went out, are one and the same person?"

The detective, full of energetic annoyance, darted hither and thither about the room as he spoke.

"Ah, I thought as much!" he exclaimed, as throwing open the doors of a wardrobe, he disclosed an untidy bundle of feminine apparel. There was a black skirt, a woman's dark hat, and—most important of all, as affording means of identification—a long cloth cloak of faded blue.

The face of plain-clothes constable Jennings dropped.

He gazed at the bundle of clothing as one transfixed. The inspector started him out of his lethargy.

"Come on, Jennings," he said sharply. "The harm's done now. Gather those clothes up and bring them along to the Yard."

A brief colloquy between the inspector and the proprietress ensued, and then the former left the place. His brows were puckered up in a frown, and it was apparent to Dr. Branksome, whom he now rejoined in the street, that something was wrong.

"Why, what's up now, inspector?" the doctor inquired.

"Oh, it's all up!" the inspector retorted ill-temperedly.

"The bird's flown!"

"Flown?"

"Absolutely. Hang that man of mine!" And he gave the doctor a brief account of what had happened. "So you see," he concluded, with a reference to the wearing apparel which he had discovered, "that the bird has flown leaving its feathers behind."

"But where on earth could she have got the disguise from?" queried Dr. Branksome.

The detective looked up, an amused smile chasing away his recent anger.

"Don't say where did she get the disguise from. It wasn't a she at all!"

"Good Heavens! What do you mean?"

"I mean," responded Inspector Trench, "that it's pretty plain to me that somebody else has been masquerading in her blue cloak."

"But who would do such——"

"Ha!" returned the officer, "that remains to be found out. But I've got a very strong suspicion that, somehow or other, the woman got on to the fact that she was being shadowed, and that somebody up at that house on Streatham Hill has helped her to baffle us."

"Whom do you think?"

"You'll excuse me, doctor, but just now I haven't time to think—or, rather, I haven't time to explain my thoughts. I've got to do now—to act—you understand?"

"And what do you intend to do?" asked Dr. Branksome.

"I'm going back to the Yard now," returned the officer; "and then I'm going on to Streatham, taking three or four reliable men with me."

"Are you going to arrest anybody?"

"Not to-night. I've no certain ground to go upon. But I'm going to post men around that house all night. Then, to-morrow morning, I'm going to fetch Miss Penhurst, and get her to take me—and you as well, if you like—on a visit to her esteemed relative, Anthony Cordelvin."

"And what will you do?"

"Don't know yet—I'm simply going for what we call at headquarters, a 'boss round.'"

Inspector Trench was a busy man that night. He kept his word to the letter. He selected his plain-clothes men, took them to Streatham Hill, and personally posted them at various points of vantage. Then, having returned to the police headquarters on the Thames Embankment, he wrote a letter, which he addressed and posted to Miss Nina Penhurst at Roehampton.

For the past few days, since her parting with Gerald Mortimer, the heart of poor Nina Penhurst had been torn with anguish. To her, like all the rest of the world, had come the news of her lover's disappearance. That disappearance, which had all the signs of foul play connected with it, had caused her the most poignant suffering. All sorts of vague apprehensions she had on the subject; eagerly each day, and several times each day, she had scanned the various editions of the papers for news of her missing sweetheart.

The case had, indeed, as was perfectly natural, caused considerable sensation; and many were the rumours, and very varied the theories, formed in connection with it. Strangely enough, Nina's own opinion, dictated, not by reason, but solely by her womanly intuition, was one which more closely coincided with the facts of the case than any of those advanced by newspapers. Instinctively the poor suffering girl connected



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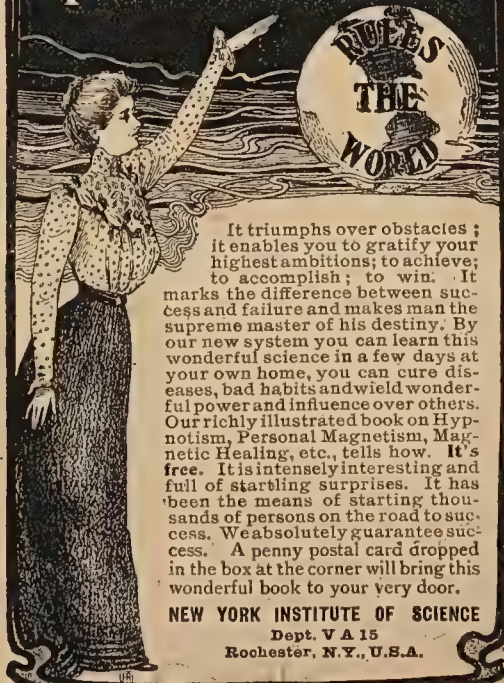
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the kidnapping of Gerald with Stephen Vanstone. Though, had she been pressed to put forth the veriest shadow of a reason for her suspicion, she could not have done so, yet she was imbued with the strongest belief that such was the case. Stephen Vanstone had attacked her; had threatened to throw her into the lake on Wimbledon Common; Gerald Mortimer had rescued her just in time. These were the premises on which the girl argued, and from which she drew a double conclusion that Stephen Vanstone henceforth bore a grudge against Gerald Mortimer, and that he had given vent to his spite by instigating the kidnapping of her lover.

Slender, indeed, and truly feminine, the argument, but the girl was convinced. For two whole days she struggled with herself as to whether she should communicate her suspicions to Police-Inspector Trench, who had previously called upon her; and she had at length made up her mind to do so. Next morning she would go to Scotland Yard. And lo and behold, on the very morning she had intended to undertake this mission, came a letter from the very officer she wanted to see; and he was asking her to see him!

She lost no time. When a woman wants to be punctual, she is always there before time. It happened, therefore, that Nina Penhurst arrived at Scotland Yard fully twenty minutes before the appointed hour.

Inspector Trench was there, however, and told her in a few brief sentences his reason for wishing to see her. She entered into the spirit of her errand at once, and very soon after that, accompanied by Inspector Trench and Dr. Branksome, was on her way to Streatham Hill.

Arrived there the four-wheeler was dismissed. The inspector's first duty was to interview the men who had been posted about the roads all night. From them he elicited the information that no one, man or woman, had issued from the old house since they had been on duty.

"Very well, then," he said, addressing two of the watchers, "come with me to within earshot of the house—I want you to be on hand in case I whistle."

These instructions being complied with, Inspector Trench, accompanied by Dr. Branksome and Nina Penhurst, passed through the side gate, walked boldly up to the front of the house, and rang the bell.

There was no response at first; but a second and more prolonged summons evidently aroused the notice of someone inside.

A footstep was heard in the hall—a light footstep, as of someone stealing up to the door and not wishing to be heard.

Discreetly the detective drew aside, pulling the doctor by the arm with him.

To anyone peering through the letter box from the inside, only the dress of Nina Penhurst was visible. The detective's implied surmise proved correct. Ned Stebbings—for it was his footstep inside—did look through the letter-box; from which he caught sight of a woman's dress. He looked through the keyhole as well, and seeing no sign of anybody else, cautiously drew back the latch and opened the door.

Before Stebbings could see who it was—before he had time to think, Inspector Trench had thrown forward a nimble left foot, and in the most natural manner in the world had placed it so as to make it impossible to shut the door.

At the officer's sudden appearance, Ned Stebbings was plainly taken aback. The inspector was as cool as a cucumber.

"Good morning!" he said, with the utmost coolness.

"We wish to see Mr. Roderick Vanstone."

Ned Stebbings went a little bit pale, and he fidgeted somewhat.

"Mr. Roderick Vanstone?" he repeated, hesitatingly.

"I'm sorry, sir, but—"

"It's very important," broke in the detective. "This lady here—Miss Penhurst—has called to see her relative, Mr. Cordelvin."

"Ha! Mister Cordelvin!" returned Stebbings, who had now recovered his presence of mind. "I was jest goin' to mention, sir, that Mister Vanstone and Mister Cordelvin hev gone away."

"Gone away!" repeated the detective.

"Yessir. Mister Cordelvin—as you or the lydy may p'raps know, sir—bein' in a weak stato of 'ealth, the master hev took 'im away for a few days' change."

"H'm! When did they go?"

"Last night, sir."

"Where have they gone to?"

"Ah—that I couldn't say, sir. Leastways, it may be Bournemouth, or it may be Torquay."

Inspector Trench hesitated a moment. He had anticipated objections, but he had not anticipated a point-blank statement that the master of the house had gone away. As a matter of fact, he did not believe that statement; as a matter of policy, he could not say so. But having gone so far, he was not willing to leave the place without finding out something. He therefore turned to Nina.

"Miss Penhurst," he said, giving her a significant look, "you must be very tired after your long journey—you will probably like to rest awhile." Then without waiting for her answer, he added to Stebbings: "This lady would like to go in and sit down for a few minutes. As a relative of Mr. Cordelvin, there can be no objection to that, I suppose?"

Ned Stebbings scratched his head.

"Well, sir," he said doubtfully, "you all bein' strangers to me, and it being' agen the orders, I ought recly to refuse; but as the young lydy's tired, I'll take the risk. Come in, miss, by all manner o' means!" And he opened the door wide.

Though he did not show it, Inspector Trench was certainly very much surprised. Surely, if this man's account of his master's absence were a lie, he would never dare challenge its refutation by an invitation to them to enter.

With his brain hard at work trying to get to the root of the matter, the detective, with Nina and Dr. Branksome, passed through the hall, and was shown into the library.

Inspector Trench threw a quick glance round the room. In this house of mystery, what would his brief inspection reveal?

(To be continued.)

A Matter of Choice.

It is said that if the elephant had the kicking power of the grasshopper in proportion to his size, one could kick a man from Liverpool to New York with one kick. This may be so; but we don't believe there is one man in a hundred but would prefer to pay and travel by steamer, even though the trip did consume seven days more time.

Couldn't Swallow That.

A SHARK swallowed a man in armour off the coast of Denmark a few years ago, last year he swallowed a horse off the coast of Ireland. last week he was seen off the coast of Sussex. While the crowd was looking at him from the pier, a copy of that week's *Harum Scurum* blew overboard, in the upper corner of which was printed, "Circulation over two hundred and fifty thousand copies weekly." The shark kindly but firmly refused to swallow that. It drew a line there, and went back again to Denmark.

The Value of Books.

A FARMER who doesn't read much says that the value of literature entirely depends. If a book had a calf-skin cover it is valuable as a razor-stop. If it is thick, it comes in first rate to put under the corner of the chest of drawers which has lost a leg. If it has a clasp on that will keep it closed; it cannot be eclipsed as a missile to hurl at a dog. If it has a large cover, like a geography, it is as good as a piece of tin to nail over a broken pane of glass. If it belongs to somebody else, it is a convenient article to hold up a window.



Conducted by
MADGE MORRIS.

[I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.]

A Proposed Love Bureau.

SOME time ago I published an answer to "THREE OLD MAIDS," who, readers will remember, were tired of single blessedness and asked me if they were too old to marry. (They each had a snug little sum of money.) This mail brings me several letters, principally from South Africans, who are eager to meet the ladies. These correspondents invite me to give them their names, and establish communications between the parties.

I fear I cannot agree to do this. To start introducing my clients to each other would involve me and this paper in too terrible a sea of complications. It might result in our being compelled to turn these offices into a Love Bureau, and the Editor says the premises and the staff are too limited to cope with such a state of affairs. He seems to think there is danger of his sanctum being converted into a rendezvous for loving couples, and, in spite of my assurances to the contrary, will not hear of the scheme. So, readers, I fear I must content myself with just advising you on general lines.

"Short Stories" as Mutual Friend.

AT the same time I may inform "THREE OLD MAIDS" that, from correspondence received, I think their best course would be to "trek" at once to the Transvaal, if they can escape the censor. The surplus of loving hearts who chafe at their severance from lovely woman, would, I imagine, fill many a concentration camp, and my lone clients would not, I should think, regret their emigration. So, my lone ones on the veld, though I cannot disclose the ladies' names, one of these days you may run against them in your own locality. The editor has no objection to your using the password "Short Stories" as a means of indentifying them, or, if you prefer it, you might say, on meeting anyone answering to the description: "Are you one of those three old maids?" producing at the same time a current copy of *Short Stories*.

And here I have another idea to suggest to my readers who are in need of establishing communication with each other, but fear to do so because of lack of introduction. Why not let *Short Stories* be your mutual friend in need? Next time a male client meets a young lady with whom he would like to be acquainted, let him produce *Short Stories*. If in return she produces it also, well, then, why not let that constitute an introduction? It will be a clear proof that the desire to know each other is mutual.

The Girl who Must Rule.

I SHOULD not advise you, "M. J. H.," unless you are a very weak-minded young man, to slavishly follow such a girl as you indicate to me. You say you are infatuated with her, but she cares only slightly for you. When you expressed your disapproval of her meeting other young men, she said, "If she married she must rule her husband, who would obey her slightest wish." No man should accept such terms from a

woman, and the girl who makes such conditions is probably merely very vain and capricious, and wants strong control.

I do not say that there are not many happy marriages in which the wife rules. But her rule, in such cases, is beneath the surface. The man looks like the figure-head, and in certain matters is master, but in home matters the woman rules, and the result is ideal for both parties. That a man should be a sort of tame puppy to a woman is against all principle, and "M. F. H.," I think I should make that very clear when you renew your suit—that is, if you are strong-minded enough to do so.

The Influence of a Fortune-teller.

"HOPEFUL" is in love with a young lady who only half reciprocates. She is engaged to another man, but "HOPEFUL" believes she does not care for him. Some months ago she went to a fortune-teller, who told her she was destined to marry a man who answered to the description of my correspondent. "HOPEFUL" is not a passive believer in destiny, but would like to know how he can actively bring it about.

I think "HOPEFUL" has good claim to his *nom-de-plume*. Now that the girl has had him put so conspicuously before her mind, perhaps she will discover that he is quite a possible husband, and that impression should do much to make her more responsive to his attentions. There is nothing like being under a lime-light, when in love, as it is a powerful influence in shaping others' feelings towards you when they are so powerfully reminded of your existence.

Does Flirting Kill True Love.

"W. L." thinks that after a man and woman have flirted for any time it is doubtful that they could become lovers. I quite agree. In love matters familiarity breeds, if not contempt, indifference, and is a thing to be avoided if the parties think they have reason to be really fond of each other. I have known many cases of people who, instead of seriously cultivating each other, have got on to terms of frivolous intimacy, with the result that they have become permanently severed in the long run. To flirt with anyone argues that you do not consider them worthy of serious regard, and that is not the right state of mind for those about to marry. A joke is an admirable thing, but it is the shortest lived of all fancies, and cannot be prolonged for ever. Neither can an intimacy which has no real basis develop into a life-long attachment.

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